Men-at-Arms

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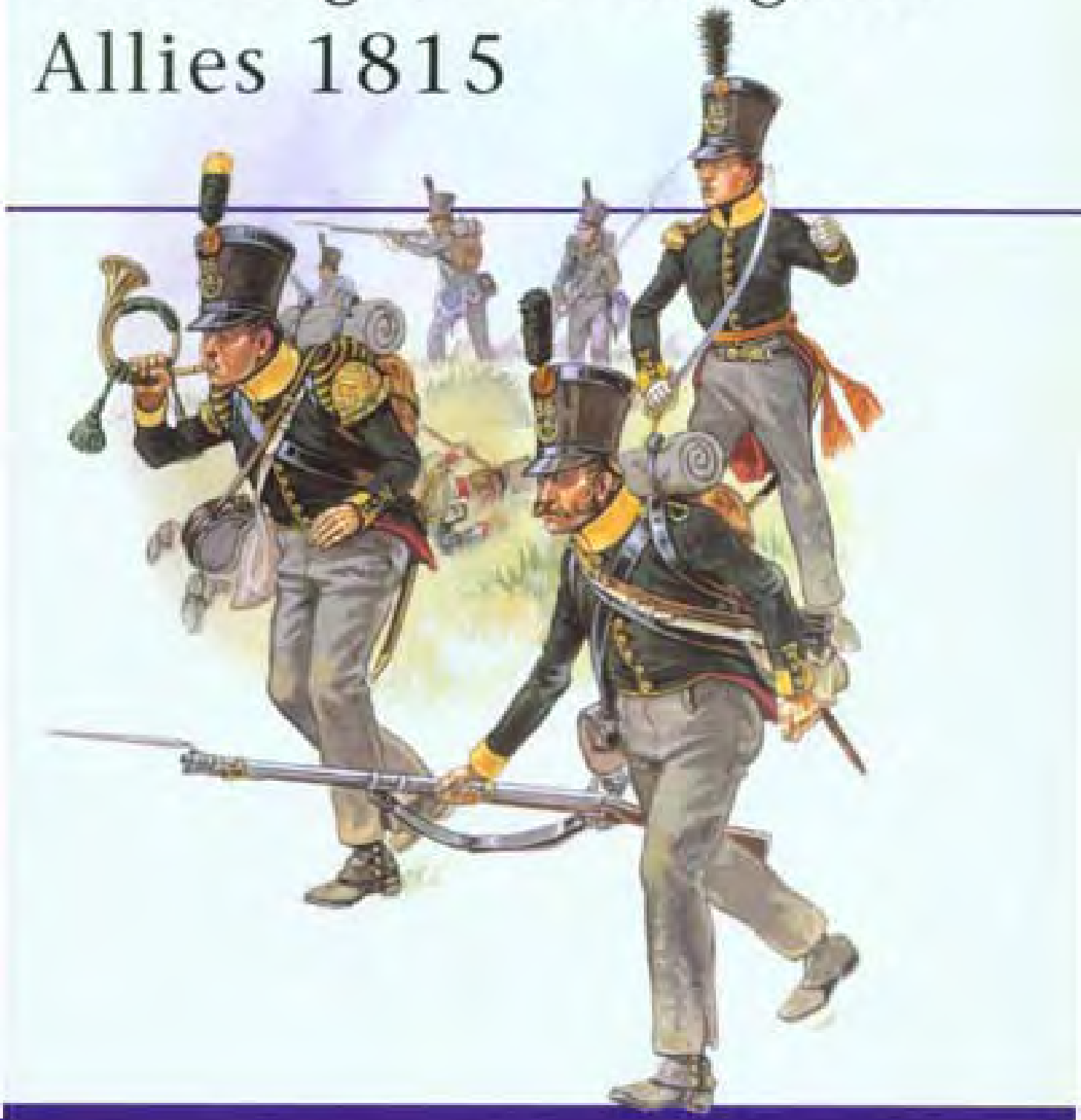
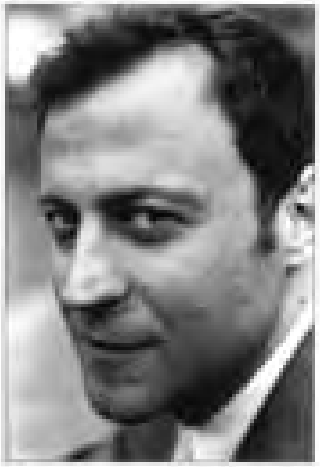
Wellington's Belgian Allies 1815



Ronald Pawly • Illustrated by Patrice Courcelle



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CONTENTS

THE LOW COUNTRIES IN 1813–14 3
- The Dutch Army reborn

THE FIRST BELGIAN TROOPS 4
- La Légion belge
- the Lower Rhine
  - Prussian-raised troops
  - Dutch-raised troops

UNIFORMS 1813–14 8
- The Belgian Legion • 1er Régiment de Chasseurs à pied
- Legion of the Lower Rhine • Maréchaussée

THE ARMY OF THE NORTH & SOUTH NETHERLANDS, 1814–15 11
- Organisation
- Line & Light Infantry • Cavalry • Artillery

UNIFORMS, 1814–15 14
- Infantry • weapons

THE ARMY OF THE KINGDOM OF THE NETHERLANDS, 1815 15
- The reorganisation of 21 April 1815
- some Belgian regimental officers in 1815

UNIFORMS, 1815 17
- Line infantry • 35th & 36th Chasseur Bns • 2nd Carabiniers
- 5th Light Dragoons • 8th Hussars • Foot artillery • Horse artillery
- Maréchaussée

THE 1815 CAMPAIGN 22
- The Belgian dilemma

QUATRE-BRAS 24
- Arrival of the 7th Line Battalion
- Van Merlen's light cavalry

WATERLOO 37
- D'Erlon's attack • the French cavalry attacks
- the Imperial Guard attack • Netherlands casualties 15–18 June 1815

BIBLIOGRAPHY 44

THE PLATES 45

INDEX 48

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Artist's Note

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WELLINGTON'S BELGIAN ALLIES 1815

THE LOW COUNTRIES IN 1813–14

Prince William of Orange, who had served under the Duke of Wellington in the Peninsular War, took command of the 'Dutch-Belgian' army of the Netherlands in 1815. In March that year his father, the Prince Sovereign William VI, acceded as King William I to the throne of the new Kingdom of the Netherlands, incorporating Holland and the Belgian territories of the former Austrian Netherlands. The units raised from 1814 in the Dutch and Belgian provinces initially served in two separate 'North and South Netherlands' establishments, but the army was ordered completely unified from February 1815. (Collection of the Wellington Museum, Waterloo)

THE POLITICAL AND MILITARY SITUATION in the Low Countries in late 1813 and early 1814 is a difficult subject for study. Their status was complex and fluid, since the Allied powers in the field against Napoleon as yet had no settled policy regarding their future. Much of the archival material from this period has been lost; we may simply summarise events as follows, however.

In the late 18th century the Low Countries were divided between the United Provinces (roughly, modern Holland) and the Austrian Netherlands (roughly, modern Belgium). Both were overrun by France in 1794 during the Revolutionary Wars. The following year the Dutch ruler – William V, Prince of Orange – fled to Great Britain. The former Austrian provinces remained effectively under French rule until 1814. Stripped of part of their territory, the former United Provinces became the Batavian Republic, under French domination and providing troops for Napoleon's campaigns. Following his victory over Austria and Russia at Austerlitz in December 1805, Napoleon set about redrawing the map of Europe; he raised the Batavian Republic to the dignity of the Kingdom of Holland, placing his brother Louis (Ludwig) on the throne.

Louis Bonaparte disappointed his brother, however, by showing signs of wishing to rule in fact rather than merely as a puppet. Napoleon harboured suspicions about Dutch loyalty, and determined simply to annex Holland (and large parts of northern Germany) to France. In 1810 French troops moved into Dutch territory, and in July King Louis was forced to abdicate. The 27,000-strong Dutch Army was absorbed into the French forces.

The Dutch Army reborn

Following the French disaster in Russia, in early 1813 Prussia rose in revolt. In March a new anti-French alliance was formed by Britain, Russia, Prussia and Sweden, joined by Austria from August 1813. In October the French were defeated by the Allied armies at Leipzig; and soon afterwards a patriotic insurrection broke out in Holland. On 30 November 1813, Prince William VI of Orange – whose father had died in exile in 1806 – returned to his country; landing at Scheveningen, he had himself proclaimed Prince Sovereign of the United Provinces. His first aim was to turn his nominal authority into reality, and to stabilise the situation in his divided country. This required the creation of a national army; on 6 December 1813 the Prince Sovereign called his people to arms, and two weeks later he decreed a *levée en masse*.

Most of the soldiers of the newly formed army were Dutch former prisoners of war, captured by the Allies mainly during the 1813 campaign in Germany. The officers, however, were mostly drawn from among retired veterans who had left the army as long ago as 1795; it would be some time before one could speak of a real army that was fit for campaigning. On 9 January 1814 it was decreed that the regular Dutch Army was to consist of:

6 battalions of Chasseurs (light infantry)
14 battalions of Line infantry
9 foreign battalions (mostly Swiss and Nassau troops)
4 regiments of cavalry – 2 of Heavy Dragoons (later to become Carabiniers), 1 of Light Dragoons and 1 of Hussars
4 battalions of Foot Artillery
1 corps of Horse Artillery
1 battalion of Engineers, Sappers and Miners
1 Train battalion
1 Garrison battalion for the Dutch possessions in the Indies

The total was to reach some 30,000 men, backed by a regular militia of about 23,000 more. Only when Dutch troops were allowed to leave the French army after Napoleon's first abdication later that year would the ranks of the new Dutch Army become stronger and more efficient.

THE FIRST BELGIAN TROOPS

In Belgium events unfolded in a more complex manner. As the Allies invaded the former Austrian Netherlands most of the former administrators fell back towards France. A strong French force under Gen Carnot held the port of Antwerp; several other French garrisons still occupied smaller coastal towns; and the army of Gen Maison, near Lille kept large parts of Flanders under threat.

Before crossing the Rhine the Allies had already decided, at the Convention of Basle, on a plan for the immediate administration of former French territories until final decisions could be reached. It had been agreed to divide Belgium under three temporary governments: the government of the Lower Rhine, with a capital at Aachen (the former departments of the Ruhr, Lower Meuse and Ourthe); the government of the Middle Rhine, based at Trier (the former department of the Forests) and the General Government of Belgium, whose capital was Brussels (the remainder of the country). In August 1814 this pattern of control was changed, leaving only two governments: that of the Lower Rhine covering all territories east of the Meuse, and administered by the Prussians; and the General Government, covering the rest of the country and administered by the Austrians.

The Prussians and Austrians alike were eager to strengthen their positions in occupied territory, to improve the defence of their frontiers against any eventual French attack. Both began recruiting troops from among the Belgian population; and this created units of three different origins. The *Légion belge* – the most important of these forces – was raised by the Austrians in the territories of the General Government; Walloon (French-speaking Belgian) forces were raised by the Prussians in the territories of the Lower Rhine; and further Walloon troops were raised

in the Lower Rhine territories by the Prince of Orange for the army of the United Provinces, with the (grudging) agreement of the Prussians.

La Légion belge

The Allied invasion of Belgium was swift. On 1 February, the advance guard of the Russian corps commanded by Gen von Winzingerode entered Brussels. With most of the former Austrian Netherlands under their control the Allies organised a provisional government of Belgium on 11 February; the next day the Duke of Beaufort was named as governor-general.

One of the first steps taken by the Allies was the creation of *'la Légion belge'* to keep the peace. On 4 March an announcement informed the populace of the immediate organisation, from volunteers, of four regiments of infantry with a total strength of 3,500 men, one regiment of cavalry and a corps of artillery. Each infantry regiment was to draw men from one of the provinces and set up a recruiting office in the provincial capital:

1st – Brabant (Brussels) – Col Baron de Poederlé
2nd – Flanders (Ghent) – Col de Polis
3rd – Hainaut (Mons) – Col N.Dupont
4th – Namur (Namur) – Col Marquis de Trazegnies d'Ittre

However, after a few days and for some unexplained reason the 3rd Regiment was ordered to move to Namur and the 4th to Tournai. Colonel de Poederlé was charged not only with the command of the 1st Regiment but also with the organisation of the entire Belgian Legion.

The cavalry regiment which had been announced was in fact not needed, since two other units were already being organised. The first, raised at Mechelen, was the Chevau-légers of Count Charles van der Burch, a former page of Louis XVI; although without military experience, he was commissioned colonel on 13 February 1814[1]. The second, organised from 1 March at Tervuren, was the Hussars of the 22-year-old Prince Ferdinand de Croij; he, too, lacked any military record. The colonels' commissions given to both noblemen were political appointments, designed to secure for the new government the loyalty of the most important families. Each regiment was to consist of a staff and four squadrons each of two companies, with a company strength of 100 men.

The artillery was to consist of one foot battalion of four companies, and two companies of horse artillery, all commanded by Col F.C.Aman de Schwanberg – a man whose only visible talent was for amassing enormous debts. At first this arm suffered from a lack of volunteers, but benefited from the appointment of Maj Vander Smissen – commissioned on 1 March 1814 – to take over its organisation and recruitment. This officer was a former *sous-lieutenant* of the French artillery who had retired from service

Charles van der Burch, a descendant of a leading Belgian noble family, was one of the first to take the red, yellow and black national cockade of Brabant when the French were driven out. On 31 March 1814 the Tsar of Russia – whose troops were involved in this campaign – awarded him the Order of St Vladimir for having embraced the Allied cause. Van der Burch had never served Napoleon, although two of his brothers were officers in the French army. Linked through his wife to the Austrian Gen von Vincent, he was commissioned on 13 February 1814 to raise a regiment of light horse for the new Belgian Legion which the Allies authorised in the immediate aftermath of the French withdrawal. He gave the regiment his name, and regarded it as his property, like a colonel of the *Ancien Régime*. Under the new monarchy the unit soon became the 5th Light Dragoons in the Netherlands army. (Collection of the Wellington Museum, Waterloo)

1 Count Charles Albert Louis Alexandre Henri van der Burch was married, on 30 May 1796, to Félicité de Rodoan; his wife was related to the Austrian governor-general of the Belgian provinces in 1814, Baron von Vincent.

Bernard Charles van der Burch (1797–1827), son of Charles, entered his father's regiment of Chevau-légers in February 1814, the month of his seventeenth birthday. Commissioned *sous-lieutenant* on 16 November 1814, he participated in the 1815 campaign with the 5th Light Dragoons, in whose uniform he is portrayed; he was wounded at Waterloo, and his conduct was praised by his commanding officer, LtCol de Mercx. On 5 February 1823 he was promoted first lieutenant in the 8th Hussars. He passed into the infantry of the army of the Dutch Indies, where the climate – and a badly treated wound sustained in a duel – undermined his health. He died at Souracarta on the island of Java on 7 April 1827. (Collection of the Château d'Ecaussinnes-Lalaing, Belgium)

after losing five toes to frostbite in the Russian campaign. The first volunteers were lucky to receive complete uniforms and equipment; this luxury would not last for long, however, and the more recruits arrived the less they were issued, until the last-comers had to make do with their civilian clothes and no equipment at all.

From his first volunteers Maj Vander Smissen was able to present 60 NCOs and men, fully uniformed and armed, for inspection by Count von Lottum, governor of Brussels. Commanded by 2nd Lt Vervoet, they were sent to Tournai to reinforce the Prussia garrison of Gen Thielmann. On 5 April a second detachment, led by 2nd Lt Weber and consisting of three corporals, two trumpeters and 21 soldiers, was sent to reinforce the first at Tournai.

The organisation of the Belgian Legion – commanded from 18 March 1814 by the Belgian-born Austrian LtGen Count von Murray – had started immediately. However, the orders had outstripped both the provision of the necessary finances and the enthusiasm of some of the Austrian governors; the result was considerable delay in recruiting and equipping the force. On 9 April the Legion numbered 1,850 infantry, 350 cavalry and 400 artillerymen. According to the *'Gazette de Bruxelles'*, on 4 May the 1st Regiment received a banner showing the Austrian eagle. That same month the Legion numbered just 4,000 men, of whom 2,500 were wearing some kind of uniform; the remaining 1,500 were the laughing stock of the local civilians, and demonstrated an eagerness to desert at every opportunity.

Raised by the same authorities we find the so-called 1er Régiment de Chasseurs à pied, organised in Bruges on the initiative of Count von Puckler-Muskau, ADC to the Duke of Saxe-Weimar. Recruiting in Flanders, it came from 19 March 1814 under the command of Prince Ernest d'Arenberg. After the absorption of the Chasseurs Leloup battalion the regiment was fully organised by mid-1814. The Chasseurs Leloup were raised near Chimay by Charles Graux, a former captain in the Austrian army, from early April 1814; it was intended to have six companies, but never managed to get enough recruits or equipment.

The Prince d'Arenberg and Count von Murray differed over such fundamentals as the future of Belgium: the prince was for a reunion with Holland, and the count wanted to restore the pre-Revolutionary rule of Austria. The 1er Chasseurs à pied's newly promoted lieutenant-colonel, the Chevalier A.H.Desnoyers de Brechainville, soon took over the daily routine of the regiment. It was high time that an experienced soldier took over command; most of the men, as in the other Belgian units, still lacked any kind of uniform or equipment (except for the British weapons that they had purchased).

On 22 March the Duke of Beaufort was replaced as governor-general by the more capable Prussian Baron van der Horst. Taking stock of the

catastrophic state of the Belgian Legion, he immediately stopped all recruiting, and on 29 March dismissed Baron Poederlé as head of the Department of War. In late April, Van der Horst, in his turn, was replaced as governor-general by the Austrian LtGen Baron von Vincent, who created a new Department of War.

The Lower Rhine: Prussian-raised troops

The government of the Lower Rhine also recruited a light infantry regiment – variously called the 2nd Chasseurs, or Regiment of the Lower Rhine – in the territory between the Rhine and the Meuse temporarily administered by the Prussians. The unit, commanded by Col Baron de Luninck, never managed to obtain uniforms, pay, or even food, and once again desertion was chronic. Once the Prince Sovereign of Holland decided to take over control of all Belgian territories Baron de Luninck handed over the regiment to the new Dutch government with relief. In August 1814 it numbered six companies with a total of 402 men. Even in January 1815 most of the officers were still complaining that they had not been paid for more than six months.

The Lower Rhine: Dutch-raised troops

Also raised in the territory under Prussian rule were Belgian troops destined to serve in the Dutch Army of the United Provinces.

On 16 December 1813 a Belgian battalion had already been raised in Holland – at first at Breda, later moved to Geertruidenberg, and finally to Kempen. Commanded by the Belgian-born Maj Perez, it would be known as the 3rd Chasseurs.

On 17 February 1814 the Prince of Orange ordered his ADC Constant-Rebecque, acting as quartermaster-general of the Dutch Army, to organise a regiment of two battalions of Walloons. Their recruitment in Liège proves that the Dutch intended to create their own Walloon Legion. Constant-Rebecque organised his two battalions but, called to another post, he handed over command to Col van der Maesen; this regiment would be known as the Legion of the Lower Rhine. The Prussians, reluctant to see these troops in Dutch service, tried every means to slow down their recruitment. Even when these territories came fully under the control of the Prince Sovereign the regiment had a full staff, all necessary officers, but only 400 men – enough for only a single battalion of six companies.

All troops levied outside the territory of the United Provinces proper and serving with the Dutch Army would be regarded as foreign regiments. Thus two distinct forces would be formed: that in the north, the army of the United Provinces and exclusively raised from Dutchmen; and that in the south, consisting of different Belgian corps of which the Belgian Legion was the principal component.

* * *

These were hard times for the Belgian population, and for the soldiers of the Belgian Legion. At an early stage the Austrian authorities in Belgium ran out of money for wages, equipment and uniforms. Officers and soldiers alike had to find themselves food and lodgings, but were refused quarters by the civilians, who already had to provide billets for the occupying foreign armies. Officers who had no private means lived in total misery. These hardships – added to the fear that they might have

to fight against their countrymen who were still serving in Napoleon's forces – all discouraged volunteers from joining the Belgian Legion. The rate of desertion was higher than the rate of enlistment. The only bright spot was the eventual distribution of some equipment, originally requisitioned for Swedish Allied troops.

On 30 March 1814, Napoleon was defeated. The Treaty of Paris sent thousands of foreign troops home from French service; experienced veterans of the Empire would find a warm welcome in the ranks of the Belgian Legion (and indeed, the Belgian regiments were almost entirely officered by men who had followed careers under Napoleon). Nevertheless, the situation did not improve: June 1814 saw no new volunteers, and an increasing toll of desertion. The 4th Infantry Regiment still had 1,600 men wearing the clothes in which they had enlisted. Conditions in the cavalry were no better; the Hussards de Croij had no uniforms at all.

With the withdrawal of French forces the local Gendarmerie disappeared as well, leaving a vacuum in the maintenance of peace in the towns and countryside. The cities created militias known as Gardes Bourgeoises, but this tended to drive the criminal element out into the countryside, where the population were already suffering depredations at the hands of the various Allied forces now occupying the former French territories.

The Allied commissioners controlling the occupied territories reacted by ordering, on 27 February 1814, the formation of a police force under the control of the General Government of Belgium, known as the **Maréchausée**. Each department under the rule of the General Government had its own company – known as a legion – commanded by a colonel, with an adjutant acting as secretary. There were two categories. Departments which had four districts were assigned first class companies, composed of a captain, a lieutenant, two *sous-lieutenants*, a sergeant-major, 8 corporals, and 80 men forming 8 *escouades*, totalling 93 all ranks. Other departments were to have second class companies, with only one *sous-lieutenant*, 6 corporals and 6 squads, totalling 70 all ranks. Subsequently those departments of Belgium under the control of other authorities also received a company of Maréchaussées each.

By 17 March the organisation was still incomplete. Even during the process of formation the plans were altered, giving each legion fewer men. Like the Belgian Legion, this police force lacked funds and was in dire need of uniforms and equipment. It was to be 1 September 1814 before the Belgian forces could look forward to a more professional level of organisation, equipment and armament.

UNIFORMS, 1813–14

Belgian Legion: Infantry

Col Rouen and Richard Knötel give the following details without naming their sources:

Troops Austrian-style shako with cut-out brass Roman capitals 'LB', a black cockade fastened with a yellow loop, red pompon, and chin scales; sometimes this is represented without the 'LB'. White, short-tailed

Austrian-style tunics (like the former Austrian Walloon regiments), with one row of brass buttons, and white shoulder straps sometimes piped in regimental distinctive colours. Collar, cuffs, turnbacks and piping in green (1st Regiment), yellow (2nd), light or sky blue (3rd) and red (4th Regiment). Grey pantaloons, black gaiters. Black leather equipment and pouch; French musket, infantry sabre and bayonet.

Officers Long-tailed *habit* coat with gold epaulettes according to rank, a gorget, and an épée sword with a gold knot; white breeches; and Hungarian-style boots with black tassels. Black bicorne hats worn *en bataille*, with black cockade and gold loop.

However, when we examine the orders placed for these uniforms there is no mention of distinctive regimental colours. Only the testimony of a certain Estagnier, a former sergeant in the 2nd Regiment, supports the existence of some kind of facings or piping as above.

Count Louis-Charles van der Burch (1786–1847) was the elder of Charles' two brothers. He entered the Chevau-légers d'Arenberg in 1805, and is portrayed here in the uniform of that regiment, which later became the 27e Chasseurs à cheval. He left the French army in 1814 as a captain, and entered the Dutch service keeping his rank. The Prince of Saxe-Weimar proposed him for a majority in his brother's regiment, but he was refused. In September 1814 he was offered a captaincy in the Hussards de Croij, but this time it was he who refused. In March 1815 he finally accepted a commission as a captain in the Militia Carabiniers. (© Afdeling Iconografie, VAKB, Brussels)

Cavalry

Chevau-légers van der Burch

Troopers Black helmet of boiled leather with a white metal crest topped with a black-over-yellow woollen *chenille* (sometimes represented as plain yellow). Front and back peaks bound in white metal; white metal 'sunray' or plain frontal plate with central 'LB', white metal chin scales. Dark green *habit-veste* jacket with two rows of eight white metal buttons, closing to the right over the breast and piped lemon yellow at that edge. Collar, cuffs, turnbacks and piping lemon yellow. Green trousers; Hungarian-style hussar boots; on campaign, grey overalls with black leather inserts, double green stripes, three white metal buttons at bottom of legs. White gauntlets; white leather shoulder and waist belts and slings, black pouch. Saddlery and accessories for all ranks, black. Dark green cloth shabraque edged with lemon yellow lace; white sheepskin edged with yellow 'wolves' teeth'. Dark green cylindrical portmanteau strapped behind the saddle, lemon yellow 'LB' and lace round the ends.

Officers Basically as troopers except silver buttons. Helmet trim silver, with 'sunray' plate and foliate decorations. Silver epaulettes, shoulder belt and all fittings; black leather waist belt and slings with silver stripes. Green breeches, silver Hungarian thigh knots, double silver stripes. Dark green shabraque edged with silver lace; portmanteau with silver lace and initials. (There is an oil study in the Army Museum in Brussels which shows officers wearing gold distinctions instead of silver.)

Trumpeters Yellow jacket faced and piped green; and a black-over-red woollen helmet crest.

Hussards de Croij

We know that on 8 June the regiment had no uniforms. Later, under Dutch control, a suitable uniform was still being sought. It had been decided from the start that it should be a sky blue French hussar-style uniform. As there are no known illustrations or portraits from this

Count Aimé-Charles van der Burch (1789–1846), youngest brother of Charles, was another former officer of the French 27e Chasseurs à cheval, in whose uniform he is portrayed. Captured by the British at Salamanca in 1812, he was sent to England, but soon exchanged for a captured Royal Navy officer. After Napoleon's abdication he entered the family regiment as a first lieutenant, but left the army on 7 January 1815. This series of Van der Burch portraits underlines the personal impact of the events of 1814–15 on many Belgian families, whose members were forced to choose sides after years of service to Napoleon. (© Afdeling Iconografie, VAKB, Brussels)

period, and knowing that most of the cavalry uniforms of the Belgian Legion were, with some minor alterations, still worn at Waterloo, we describe the uniform in the chapter on 1815.

Artillery

In March 1814 the uniform seems to have been bottle green like that of the cavalry, although it was to become dark blue (see Plate B1). Only one illustration is to be found in Col Rouen's study *'l'Armée Belge'* which gives us a more realistic view of the uniforms worn by the Artillery Corps:

Green French-style long-tailed *habit* coat with lapels pointed at the lower end; brass buttons. Red piping on collar, cuffs, lapels, vertical pockets; red epaulettes. Scarlet waistcoat with black braiding and three rows of small brass buttons. Green hussar-style breeches; red stripe on outer seams curving round to seat; Hungarian thigh knots or 'spearheads' according to rank (officers probably the latter, the number of laces indicating rank). Black Hungarian-style boots trimmed and tasselled with red. Black French-style shako, red cords and tassels; brass plate of crossed cannons; red pompon, black cockade and plume. White leather belt.

1er Régiment de Chasseurs à pied 'Pike blue' *(bleu-brochet)* uniform; turnback ornaments, green buglehorns for troops, gold for NCOs and officers. Hungarian-style boots without tassels.

Chasseurs Leloup This unit wore Austrian-style uniform. In May 1814 the Austrians ordered 3,564 sky blue tunics and a similar number of breeches, waistcoats, etc. – all in the same colour, and all to dress the light infantry (Chasseurs) regiments. However, knowing that the Chasseurs Leloup were dressed in the same way as their predecessors - in pike grey with green facings – we have to consider that this 'sky blue' might mean 'pike grey' *(hechtgrau)*.

2e Régiment de Chasseurs à pied The second light infantry regiment, raised by Baron de Luninck, wore a steel grey uniform with red cuffs, and tight Hungarian breeches with yellow woollen braid.

Legion of the Lower Rhine Both battalions of Col van der Maesen's regiment wore dark blue single-breasted short jackets in the British style, with white collar, turnbacks and piping, and brass buttons numbered '1' or '2' for the battalion. White long-sleeved fatigue waistcoat; grey trousers, and greatcoat; short black gaiters. Shako with copper plate embossed with a crowned 'W'. All leather equipment was white. Officers wore similar uniforms but with long tails, gold buttons and epaulettes according to rank.

Maréchaussée Dark green single-breasted long-tailed jacket; red collar and cuffs. Grey waistcoat, breeches, overcoat; black gaiters – boots for the mounted personnel. Black bicorne with white-and-green cockade and white loop. White leather shoulder belts, black pouch. Mounted personnel were armed with a sword, with a white leather knot, and a pair of pistols; infantry, with a musket, and an infantry sabre with a red knot.

THE ARMY OF THE NORTH & SOUTH NETHERLANDS, 1814–15

Article 6 of the Treaty of Paris, dated 30 May 1814, indicated that Holland, ruled by the House of Orange, would govern larger territories than previously. Two weeks later the Prince Sovereign's younger son Prince Frederik took over command of the Dutch forces 'occupying' Belgium. On 1 August 1814 the Austrian-Belgian territories were handed over to the United Provinces; and Prince Frederik took over the task of organising the Belgian Legion, independent from the regular Dutch Army. Command of the Legion was given to the Dutch Gen Fagel. The battalions commanded by Maj Perez (3e Chasseurs) and Col van der Maesen (Legion of the Lower Rhine) were absorbed.

On 15 August it was decided that from 1 September onwards the Belgian troops would receive the same organisation, regulations and training as their Dutch brothers-in-arms. They would, however, retain their autonomy – and also their uniforms, with the exception of the cockade worn on the headgear, which was changed from black to orange with effect from 24 August.

When the Belgian troops were handed over to the United Provinces by the Austrians their establishment was as follows:
4 regiments of Line Infantry – 1,545 men each, total 6,180
1 regiment of Chasseurs – 1,545 men
Total establishment of infantry – 7,725
1 battalion of Artillery – 500 men
1 regiment of Chevau-légers – 500 men
1 regiment of Hussars – 500 men
Total establishment of Belgian units – 9,225 men

However, at that stage these establishments were far from filled; and less than 50 per cent of the troops had uniforms of any kind. The artillery, for example, still had no uniforms or arms at all. The officers had not yet been paid, and the troops only sporadically. The only equipment they had were 12 English cannon, without other matériel, and the artillery train had only 12 draft horses. The rate of desertion was still high, and the men threatened to abscond en masse if the pay problem was not solved. Under the circumstances the inflow of new volunteers was extremely low.

On 10 August 1814 the newly annexed Belgian territories were divided into four military districts: the 1st, comprising Brabant and Antwerp, had headquarters at Louvain; the 2nd, Hainaut and Namur, HQ at Mons; the 3rd, East and West Flanders, HQ at Ghent; and the 4th, Liège and Luxemburg, had headquarters at Hasselt. Each district had a recruiting office linked to one of the infantry battalions. The cavalry and artillery recruited their men where their depots were located: the Chevau-légers at Mechelen, the Hussars at Ath, and the artillery – composed of four companies – also at Mechelen. However, these military districts existed only until 16 December 1814, when a general recruiting office was established in Brussels; this would last until 25 June 1815. One by one, the original unit commanders were replaced by more experienced officers who had earned their epaulettes during the Napoleonic Wars.

The Maréchaussée was placed under the command of Col Guillaume Baron de Roisin, and once more reorganised. The legions were transformed into seven companies, each consisting of several 'brigades', and some improvement was achieved. For a while the former title 'Gendarmerie' was re-introduced, but this was short-lived: to the population it was a name with unhappy echoes of their sufferings under the French Imperial equivalent, and 'Maréchaussée' was soon restored.

When Napoleon escaped from Elba in late February 1815 the reorganisation of the Dutch Army was still taking place, with the intention that its component North and South Netherlands forces would reach the following strengths:

Dutch troops	*Belgian troops*
4 bns Chasseurs	2 bns Chasseurs
12 bns Line infantry	10 bns Line infantry
20 bns Militia infantry	? bns Militia infantry
1 Garrison bn	—
2 regts Carabiniers	1 regt Carabiniers
1 regt Light Dragoons	1 regt Light Horse
1 regt Hussars	1 regt Hussars
Artillery:	
1 Mounted Corps (6 cos)	1 Mtd.Corps (2 cos)
5 Line foot bns	1 Line foot bn
4 Militia foot bns	2 Militia foot bns
1 Train bn	—
1 Engineer bn (3 cos)	—
Foreign units:	
2 infantry bns, Orange-Nassau	—
2 light inf bns, Nassau	—
4 Swiss regiments	—

Line & Light Infantry

Those responsible for the organisation of these Belgian units encountered the same difficulties as had the Dutch in early 1814. The existing infantry regiments of the Belgian Legion, used as the nucleus for the new organisation, in fact had only enough men for a single battalion each:

1st Regt (Brabant)	became Belgian 1st Line Inf Bn
2nd Regt (Flanders)	became Belgian 7th Line Inf Bn
3rd Regt (Namur)	500 men distributed among other units
4th Regt (Hainaut)	became 4th Belgian Line Inf Bn
(1st) Light Inf Regt (d'Arenberg)	became Belgian 5th Chasseur Bn
(2nd) Light Inf Regt (de Luninck)	became Belgian 10th Chasseur Bn

In September 1814 the Dutch government decided to dissolve six Dutch infantry battalions; and to amalgamate the 3rd Chasseurs (Maj Perez) with the Dutch 6th Chasseur (or Jäger) Bn stationed at Doesburg

Some 137 men of Belgian origin transferred, with the approval of Perez, to the new Belgian 10th Chasseur Bn at Hasselt. This consisted of eight companies, of which six were centre companies; the other two were considered crack troops. One was formed from De Luninck's Lower Rhine battalion, still wearing their steel grey uniforms; the other, from men of the former 3rd Regiment of the Belgian Legion, who retained their Austrian-style white uniforms with light blue facings.

De Luninck was dismissed, his command of the 10th Chasseur Bn going to a Napoleonic veteran, LtCol Charles Goethals; but despite the gradual replacement of other inexperienced officers by returning Belgian veterans of Napoleon's army, the situation in the battalion remained unsatisfactory. Most of the troops at this stage were Poles, Russians, Germans, Frenchmen and Spaniards.

Colonel van der Maesen's Walloon regiment, the Legion of the Lower Rhine, ceased to exist as a foreign corps, and became the new Belgian 2nd Line Battalion.

Each of these units was to consist of a regimental staff, six companies of which four were centre and two flank companies, and a depot company; their total effective strength was to be 30 officers and 912 men. Company establishment was one each captain, first and second lieutenants, sergeant-major and quartermaster; 4 sergeants, 8 corporals, 2 drummers, a fifer and 108 privates. By 15 September 1814 the reorganisation was complete. Two days later it was stated that the 1st, 4th, and 7th Line Bns and 5th Chasseur Bn were at full strength and fully staffed.

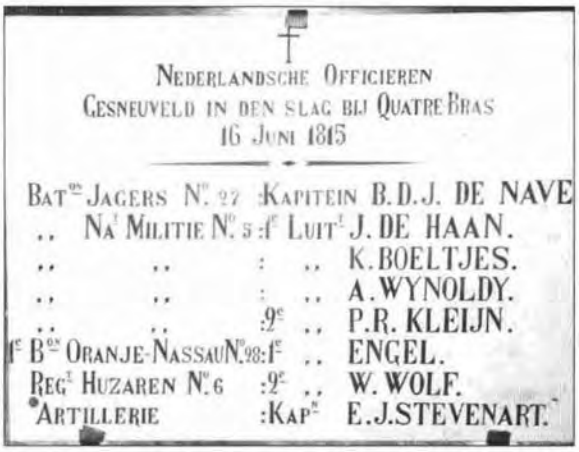
Impression of the fall of LtCol Lambert-Paul Coenegracht at Waterloo. Coenegracht entered military service in 1790; a captain by 1804, he became lieutenant-colonel of the 2nd Cuirassier Regt under King Louis Bonaparte of Holland. Passing into French service, he commanded the escort of Marshal Marmont in Spain. After leaving the French army in 1814 he commanded the Dutch 1st Carabiniers in Trip's brigade at Waterloo; mortally wounded near La Haye Sainte, he died the next day. His sword and watch are in the Wellington Museum, Waterloo. The Jäger figure in the foreground is interesting; he wears a covered British-style shako, and the details of the *flanquer's* shoulder roll differ from other sources; a single yellow or gold chevron is visible above his cuff. (Collection of the Wellington Museum, Waterloo)

Cavalry

The regiments of Van der Burch and De Croij became respectively the 'Chevau-légers belges' and 'Hussards belges'.

On 7 September 1814 the Prince Sovereign decreed the formation of two regiments of heavy cavalry – 'Carabiniers belges' – but through lack of success in recruiting only one would be formed. Commanded by Col de Knijff and quartered in Brussels, the Carabiniers Corps was nevertheless ordered reorganised from 31 October 1814 in three regiments – two North and one South Netherlands. Command of the Belgian unit passed to LtCol Baron van Oldeneel on 3 April 1815, but the next day to Col de Bruyn. This 2nd Carabiniers' first official appearance was on 4 January 1815 at the funeral of the Prince de Ligne, when they formed a guard of honour at the Church of Saints Michel & Gudule.

On 4 April a Militia Carabinier regiment, 805 strong, was ordered raised in the South Netherlands; Col du Chastel would preside over its organisation between 10 April and 21 June 1815, when Baron van Oldeneel took over command. They were not committed to the Waterloo campaign – indeed, no Belgian Militia units would serve there. After the Hundred Days the Militia Carabiniers would become the 9th regiment, rebaptised Cuirassiers and equipped with French cuirasses from the field of Waterloo.



Memorial plaque in the church at Waterloo, commemorating the North and South Netherlands officers killed at Quatre-Bras. The last-named is Capt Stevenart of the artillery, who fell commanding a Belgian foot battery.

Artillery

On 14 September 1814 it was decided that the Belgian artillery establishment was to be:
1 Horse Brigade (2 companies)
1 Foot Brigade (6 companies)
1 Train Brigade (2 companies in peacetime, 6 in wartime).

In November 1814 the uniforms for the Artillery Corps finally arrived.

* * *

The political situation in France would soon drastically change the organisation of the two autonomous armies of the North and South Netherlands. On 17 February 1815 the Belgian forces were informed that they were to be united with the Dutch regiments in a single Netherlands army.

Some two weeks later Napoleon landed in the south of France and began the triumphant progress northwards by which, without firing a shot, he would regain the Imperial throne of France. The predictable threat of a French offensive directed at Belgium prompted an Allied instruction that the Netherlands should start organising a field army *(armée mobile)*. Orders were accordingly sent out on 25 March; but they presented considerable difficulties. On 14 March, Gen Evers had inspected the Hussards de Croij; he noted that although the personnel numbered 36 officers and 827 troopers, and the officers had 68 horses, only 379 mounts were available for the men.

On 16 March 1815, without waiting for a final decision from the Allied powers gathered at the Congress of Vienna, the Prince Sovereign took the crown, becoming King William I of the Netherlands and Grand Duke of Luxemburg. The Congress ratified his decision on 31 March. The king's eldest son now took the title of William, Prince of Orange. A former ADC to the Duke of Wellington during the Peninsular War, the prince took command of the combined army of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. In the campaign of June 1815 the northern (Dutch) and southern (Belgian) regiments of the Netherlands Army would serve shoulder to shoulder.

UNIFORMS, 1814–15

As the new uniforms were mainly to be found in the infantry, artillery and Maréchaussée, we will deal here only with the infantry, which provides proof of the introduction of the new uniforms.

By a decree of 1 September 1814, the Belgian Line Infantry regiments were to receive blue single-breasted jackets in the British style, with brass buttons. Collar and cuffs were green for the battalions recruited in the 1st Military District (Brabant & Antwerp); yellow for those of the 2nd (Hainaut & Namur); light blue for those of the 3rd (East & West Flanders); and scarlet for those of the 4th (Liège & Luxemburg). Grey trousers, short black gaiters, a white long-sleeved waistcoat, a grey overcoat, a shako and a forage cap completed the uniform.

However, it is only on 10 January 1815 that we find proof that there had been a change in uniforms. On that day the Belgian newspaper *'L'Oracle'* announced that 'The Belgian infantry, who wore a white uniform, will change it for a dark blue one'. The previous day the *'Journal de la Belgique'* had announced that Belgian infantry would receive blue, English-style uniforms, but a decision had not yet been made about headgear. The NCOs were to receive their new uniforms on the day that the newspaper spread the news. Officers would also have to wear an orange sash. On the 13th of that month *'L'Oracle'* reported that 'Some Belgian officers displayed their new uniforms. Dark blue and single-breasted. Collar, cuffs and piping white, red lining and sloping pockets.' On 23 January, we read in the *'Journal'* that Belgian officers in garrison in Brussels went to mass wearing their new uniforms and their new 'English-form shakos, with a W on the front'. On the 31st we again read that the Belgian battalion are dressed in blue uniforms '*à l'anglaise*: same cut of coat, same shako, wide grey trousers and half-gaiters. The officers wear the orange sash.'

The 5th and 10th Chasseur Bns wore green single-breasted jackets, cut like those of the Line, and an Austrian-style shako with a red plume. The question of their facings and piping is, however, more complex. Bieberstein, who served in the 10th Bn, mentions in a letter that both battalions had yellow piping. F.J.G.Ten Raa states that the 10th Bn had red facings and piping, scarlet lining, and broad grey trousers worn over short grey gaiters. Each battalion had its own number on the buttons. An inventory gives us the following details, however: short coat in green cloth, cuffs and piping yellow, turnbacks red, lining scarlet, green shoulder rolls (or wings) with yellow stripes, 17 large and 8 small buttons.

Weapons

At first the Dutch government had only muskets from the old arsenals of the pre-1810 army, or weapons left behind by the retreating French. The most generally used was an improved French M1777 model of 17.5mm calibre. To fill the need for arms Britain provided the 0.75in India Pattern musket, which would stay in use until 1821. On 23 August 1814 the design for a new M1815 musket for the North and South Netherlands armies, based on the French model, was accepted, and production subsequently began in Antwerp, Delft and Liège; it is not known how many were in use during the 1815 campaign alongside the French and British patterns. The Chasseurs were armed with the French An IX dragoon model. The light cavalry also received an M1815 carbine of 17.1mm calibre based on the French M1786, and pistols of the same calibre.

THE ARMY OF THE KINGDOM OF THE NETHERLANDS, 1815

On 21 April 1815 the Netherlands Army made its final reorganisation before marching off to prove itself on the battlefield. The Belgian and Dutch regiments were now numbered in a single sequence, and would operate together in amalgamated brigades and divisions. Before this reorganisation the Belgian units comprised:

2 bns Chasseurs
4 bns Line Infantry
1 regt Carabiniers
1 regt Light Horse
1 regt Hussars
1 bn Foot Artillery
2 cos Horse Artillery
2 cos Train
7 cos Maréchaussée (Gendarmerie)

The April 1815 changes were as follows:

1st Line Inf Bn	unchanged
2nd Line Inf Bn	became 3rd Bn
4th Line Inf Bn	unchanged
7th Line Inf Bn	unchanged
5th Chasseur Bn	became 35th Chasseur Bn
10th Chasseur Bn	became 36th Chasseur Bn

The Carabiniers regiment became the 2nd Carabiniers; the Chevau-légers regiment (ex-Van der Burch) became the 5th Light Dragoons; and the Hussar regiment (ex-De Croij) became the 8th Hussars.

The Belgian Horse Artillery and Train were entirely absorbed into the Dutch Horse Artillery and Train Corps. The Belgian Foot Artillery became the 4th Artillery Battalion. Local Militia Artillery Bns Nos. 1, 2 & 3 became Bns Nos. 2, 5 & 6. In total, the artillery corps of the new Netherlands Army consisted of 4 Line foot battalions, 6 Militia battalions, 8 horse companies and 8 companies of the artillery train.

For the Waterloo campaign the eight-gun artillery batteries would not be assigned to brigades but to divisions. Major Vander Smissen commanded the artillery of Gen Chassé's 3rd Infantry Division, consisting of Capt C.F.Krahmer de Bichin's horse battery and Capt J.H.Lux's Dutch foot battery. De Villers du Fourneau acted as assistant to Vander Smissen, his battery being united with that commanded by Krahmer, who thus now commanded the Belgian 7th and 8th artillery companies. Captain E.J.Stevenart's foot battery would be assigned to the 2nd Infantry Division.

In their new formations the South Netherlands regiments (as they were still called) went into battle at Quatre-Bras and Waterloo. Most of their general officers were Dutch, with the exception of Van Merlen, De Collaert and d'Aubremé, as were most staff officers at division and brigade level.

Some Belgian regimental officers in 1815

Given the discussion, at the time and since, regarding the presence of former officers of Napoleon's army, a few specifics may be interesting.

35th Chasseur Bn On 12 June 1815 at Haine-Saint-Paul the battalion numbered 21 officers and 584 men. Out of 50 officers who had been commissioned since the raising of the unit, 28 were veterans of the French Imperial army. Two were Officers and three were Knights of the Legion of Honour; one of the latter, De Wauthier, also wore the Cross 1st Class of the Order of Westphalia.

LEFT AND ABOVE **The monument raised by today's Netherlands cavalry regiments (titles at the bottom) at Quatre-Bras in September 1990 in memory of the Dutch and Belgian cavalry regiments which fought at Quatre-Bras and Waterloo: 6th and 8th Hussars, 1st, 2nd and 3rd Carabiniers, 4th and 5th Light Dragoons.**

36th Chasseurs Bn On 12 June 1815 at Morlanwelz the battalion had 22 officers and 633 men. Of 59 officers commissioned since the raising of the unit, 27 were French army veterans, of whom two were Knights of the Legion of Honour.

5th Light Dragoons 13 officers, 3 NCOs and one trooper (Van Gentenne) were members of the Legion of Honour. One was the commanding officer, LtCol Edouard Alexis de Mercx, a former captain in the 1er Chevau-légers Lanciers and a Knight of the Legion of Honour, who was a much-scarred veteran of the Russian campaign. Captain Colnet wore the Silver Medal of Austria; 2nd Lt Druyvesteen was not only a member of the Legion of Honour but also a Knight of the Royal Order of the Two Sicilies. Captain Delenne wore the crosses of the Legion of Honour and the Order of Westphalia.

8th Hussars Colonel Ignace Duvivier had been a major in the 4e Chasseurs à cheval and as recently as 1814 had commanded the 16e Chasseurs. Duvivier was an Officer of the Legion of Honour and a Baron of the Empire; LtCol de Latour was a Knight of the Empire. Five other officers were members of the Legion of Honour, of whom two also wore the knight's cross of the second grand order of the Empire, the Imperial Order of the Reunion.

2nd Carabiniers Out of 377 members of the regiment there were 35 foreigners, of whom 23 were Germans; and 141 Belgians, of whom 114 had served Napoleon. Colonel de Knijff was a former equerry to Murat, King of Naples, and as such a Commander in the Order of the Two Sicilies; he was also a Knight of the Legion of Honour and a member of the Royal Military Order of Maximilian-Joseph of Bavaria. Lieutenant-Colonel van Oldeneel was an Officer in the Legion of Honour. Major Maurice Ignace de Mercx had served in the Austrian army and was a Knight of that country's Order of Merit; and Cpl Bonnet was decorated with the Austrian Military Order. Eight other officers were members of the Legion of Honour. (Eight officers of the regiment would subsequently become generals.)

Artillery Of 51 officers who served in the corps from its foundation until the battle of Waterloo, 37 were veterans of the Napoleonic Wars; two were Knights of the Legion of Honour and one held the *décoration du Lys.*

UNIFORMS, 1815

In general, rank distinctions were based upon the French system; for the infantry they were gold, and buttons were brass or gilt. (The Dutch units wore silver, with white metal buttons.) Officers of all arms were expected to wear an orange sash; however, some sources state that these were only worn after the battle of Waterloo – e.g. an NCO and master-at-arms of the 2nd Carabiniers wrote that this was the case in his regiment.

Line Infantry

Flank companies Black 'Belgic' shako resembling British 1812 pattern; red or green plume and cords for the heavy and light companies respectively (presumably – sources are unclear, both red and green being mentioned, but only one specifically mentions a grenadier company); orange cockade, brass plate bearing crowned cypher 'W'.

Dark blue single-breasted jacket of British pattern; white collar, straight cuffs, and piping, including to blue cuff flaps and shoulder straps; blue shoulder rolls with white piping; red turnbacks; 9 brass buttons bearing battalion number. Grey trousers, short black gaiters, black shoes. Leather equipment white; wooden British pattern canteen painted light blue; sabre with brass hilt, white leather knot with orange tassels. Grey greatcoat worn rolled on knapsack. French musket.

Centre companies As flankers, except white shako plume and cords; no shoulder rolls, 'duck's-foot' shoulder straps; English musket. Infantry NCOs wore stripes above the cuffs: two gold for sergeant-major, one gold for sergeant, two white for corporal. (Some sources give diagonal stripes, others chevrons.)

Officers Shako with gilded plate, gold cords, orange cockade, white plume. Same basic coatee as rankers but long-tailed; red turnbacks united by a button; long vertical pockets with three buttons; gold epaulettes. Orange waist sash. Grey breeches worn in black boots *à la Souvarov*, rounded top at front, no tassels; grey overalls worn on campaign. White sword belt; British infantry pattern officer's épée, brass hilt, ivory grip, gold knot, black scabbard. Grey greatcoat sometimes worn rolled around body; also, grey knee-length raincoat with white collar and brass buttons.

Drummers As privates, but white 'swallow's nests' laced and trimmed with yellow (flank companies, with blue and white rolls above). White leather drum sling with brass drumstick holder, black drumsticks. White leather apron; brass drum with painted bands of white, blue and red triangles; white cords.

35th & 36th Chasseur Bns

Flank companies Austrian-style shako; green plume tipped yellow,

OPPOSITE **Three Belgian soldiers in 1815. (Left) a sapper of a Line infantry 'flanker' company, wearing French-style embellishments – colpack, full beard, apron, axe, and decorated crossbelts and belly pouch. Two NCO rank stripes are just visible above his right gauntlet; they are clearer (centre), in silver, identifying this NCO of the 2nd Carabiniers as a sergeant-major. (Right) is a gunner of the Dutch-Belgian artillery corps; though the black-faced dark blue uniform is obscured here, it does show the shako plate well. (Collection of the Belgian Royal Army Museum, Brussels)**

orange cockade, brass buglehorn below battalion number. Green single-breasted jacket; yellow collar, cuffs, and piping, including to green cuff flaps and shoulder straps; green shoulder rolls trimmed with red, red turnbacks, brass buttons. Grey trousers, black gaiters and shoes. Black leather equipment and pouch; infantry sabre with black scabbard; unshaven hide knapsack with black straps; grey greatcoat.

Hornists Red plume and cords; shako plate as for troops. Jacket as privates but green shoulder rolls with yellow trim, yellow 'swallow's nests' with gold lace and fringes. Brass horn, green cord and tassel.

Centre companies Troops wore the same uniforms as the flankers, but with a green shako plume, and no shoulder rolls on the jacket.

Officers: Basically as rankers, but gilded shako plate, green pompon; long-tailed coatee, gold epaulettes; sash, sword equipment, breeches, boots, overalls as Line Infantry officers.

Cavalry

2nd Carabiniers

Troopers White metal helmet with a brass crest, plume holder, chin scales, and binding to front and rear peaks; brass lion's-mask plate, brass grenade on front of crest; padded black horsehide *chenille* crest in French Carabinier style; white feather plume from holder above left side rosette of chin scales. Dark blue short-tailed *habit-veste* with squared red lapels; dark blue collar piped red; vertical pockets, three white metal buttons, red piping; red cuffs, dark blue flaps piped red; red turnbacks, white grenade ornaments; red woollen epaulettes. On campaign the lapel was worn buttoned across showing the blue side edged with red. White leather breeches; on campaign, grey overalls, white wooden buttons – red outer seam stripes were added after Waterloo. Heavy cavalry boots, white metal spurs; white gauntlets. White leather shoulder belt, brass fittings; black pouch, white metal grenade ornament. White leather sword belt, square brass buckle with grenade. French An XI or XIII heavy cavalry sword, white leather knot. At Waterloo they charged with their rolled grey cloaks slung over the right shoulder for extra protection.

Horse furniture was very similar to French Cuirassier style, apart from lacking the regimental number on the squared end of the portmanteau. Black leather bridle and harness; dark blue squared shabraque with white lace edging and white grenade corner ornament; dark blue portmanteau with white lace edging at ends; white sheepskin with red 'wolf's teeth' edging.

Officers Silver-plated helmets with gilded fittings; a portrait of Col de Bruyn shows extra foliate ornaments, white plume with black base, and crest of black fur rather than horsehide. Similar uniform to troopers, but with long tails; silver buttons, epaulettes according to rank, and turnback grenades. French heavy cavalry sword with grenade on guard; silver knot. Silver lace and grenades on shabraque, and lace on portmanteau. Black sheepskin.

Trumpeters As for troopers, but long-tailed red jacket with dark blue facings, white epaulettes. Helmet with white crest, red plume. White tasselled trumpet cord.

5th Light Dragoons

Troopers The uniform did not change from that worn by the

Chevau-légers van der Burch (see above, *Uniforms, 1813–14*) apart from the headgear. The black leather helmet was replaced by a dark green French-style shako with a white top band, cords and raquettes; white metal crowned 'W'; brass chin scales; orange cockade with white loop and button; black plume with yellow tip.

Officers French-style cylindrical *shako rouleau*; silver cords looping down and forward under left arm, fastening to right epaulette with two tassels; silver crowned cypher; top band of silver interlocking rings; green plume, sometimes represented with yellow tip. Belts and epaulettes silver; pouch with silver crowned cypher surrounded by silver laurels. Grey campaign overalls with double stripes of regimental-coloured lace down outer leg, and short black boots, replaced the Hungarian breeches and boots.

Trumpeters Dark green French-style shako with white plume (sometimes represented as green with yellow tip). Single-breasted *habit* coat in lemon yellow with green facings.

Returning home afer the battle of Waterloo, an officer of the 2nd Carabiniers introduces a brother officer to his family. The ornate helmet with gilt frontal lion's-mask, the French heavy cavalry sabre and the buttoned, collared riding cloak are all carefully rendered. The officer in the cloak closely resembles a portrait of Col de Bruyn – see page 45. (Collection of the Belgian Royal Army Museum, Brussels)

8th Hussars

Troopers Black French-style shako with white top band, cords and raquettes; white metal crowned 'W' cypher and chin scales; orange cockade, white loop, black plume. French-style hussar uniform in sky blue with white cords and lace, white metal buttons. Pelisse with black fur trim (not worn on campaign); dolman with red collar and cuffs piped white. Hungarian breeches with thigh knots and side stripe; on campaign, grey overalls, red side stripes. Black Hungarian boots, white trim and tassel. Red and white barrel sash; white leather belts; black pouch (possibly with white metal cypher); black leather sabretache with white metal cypher; British light cavalry sabre. Sky blue hussar-style shabraque laced white; white sheepskin edged white; round sky blue portmanteau edged white. Black saddlery and harness. M1815 pistol.

Officers Cylindrical shako, which might have been red, with top band of interlinked rings. Essentially troopers' uniform but with silver metal and lace; sometimes white fur pelisse trim. Rank distinctions on sleeves of pelisse and dolman and thighs of breeches. Red leather pouch belt and sabretache with silver lace; silver pouch lid with cypher and laurel leaves. On campaign, black sabretache with cypher; grey overalls with red stripes; armament as troopers. Black sheepskin.

Trumpeters Red shako with white plume. Uniform as troopers but red with sky blue collar and cuffs, white lace and cords, black or brown fur pelisse trim.

Foot Artillery

Gunners Austrian-style shakos; brass 'sunray' plate with grenade in cartouche; orange cockade,

yellow loop and button; short red plume with black tip. Dark blue short-tailed single-breasted jacket, brass buttons, red turnbacks with blue grenade ornaments; black collar and cuffs, dark blue cuff flaps and shoulder straps all piped red, as were vertical pockets and front and bottom edges of jacket. Grey trousers, dark grey gaiters, short black boots. White leather belts; infantry sabre in black scabbard.

Officers Similar uniform but with gold rank distinctions. Short black shako plume; black trousers over short black boots; épée with gold knot.

Shown in his later uniform as a Belgian major-general, LtCol Edouard Alexis de Mercx (1788–1855) commanded the Belgian 5th Light Dragoons in 1815. A former officer in the French 1st Lancers, he had been wounded seven times during Napoleon's campaign in Russia; taken prisoner, he escaped from Siberia on 4 August 1813 to rejoin the French army and continue the fight. (© Afdeling Iconografie, VAKB, Brussels)

Horse Artillery

The Belgian horse battery at Waterloo were uniformed in the same way as their Dutch comrades. Shako as Foot Artillery but with brass crown over crossed cannons; red cords and raquettes; orange cockade, and a tall black plume. Jackets as Foot Artillery but with pointed cuffs, and shoulder rolls like infantry flankers but in red with yellow piping. Grey breeches with red stripe, black Hungarian boots with black tassel; grey campaign overalls with black leather booting, red side stripe and white metal buttons. White pouch belt, brass fittings, black pouch with brass grenade ornament; white waist belt, brass grenade plate; curved sabre, brass hilt as Carabiniers, white metal scabbard.

Officers Essentially the same uniform but with gold cords, fittings, and epaulettes instead of shoulder rolls. Black pouch belt with gilt fittings – see Plate H2.

Trumpeters Red shako cords, white plume. Red jacket faced black; black epaulette straps, yellow edging and fringe.

Artillery Train Shako as Horse Artillery but white metal crowned crossed cannons and chin scales. Grey jackets, red turnbacks, white metal buttons; black collar, straight cuffs, cuff flaps, and grey shoulder straps, all piped red. Overalls as Horse Artillery; black waist belts.

Maréchaussée

Mounted companies Black bicorne bound with white lace, orange cockade, white loop, white plume. Dark blue long-tailed double-breasted coat; sky blue lapels, collar, cuffs and lining; sky blue turnbacks with white grenade ornament; two rows of 7 white metal buttons with grenade motif; white shoulder knot and aiguillette. White leather breeches; black heavy cavalry boots. Shoulder and waist belts white leather, black pouch with white metal grenade ornament. Carbine with bayonet, two pistols, sabre. Dark blue heavy cavalry shabraque, broad white lace edging, white embroidered grenade in rear corners. Dark blue squared portmanteau, ends edged with white lace, central white grenade.

Foot companies The same uniform but with white epaulettes in place of the trefoil knot and aiguillette; cotton trousers, and gaiters. French dragoon musket, infantry *sabre-briquet*.

Officers Essentially the same uniforms but with silver metal and lace, and the addition of a single left epaulette to the mounted uniform.

If I am a thoroughbred racehorse, and I command an army composed of other thoroughbreds, draft-horses and ponies, then in battle I will see to it that the lesser breeds will take the blows. I will win the battle with my fellow thoroughbreds, taking the credit for victory and blaming the draft horses and ponies for everything that went wrong ... .

Though crudely simplified, this was the attitude of the British high command to the battles of June 1815 which can be deduced from the works of early British commentators – specifically, the influential but flawed account by Capt W.Siborne in his *'History of the Waterloo Campaign'* published in 1844, which did less than justice to the North and South Netherlanders. However, in more recent times an honest examination of a broader range of sources than those consulted by Siborne has painted a more balanced picture of the actual events than that created in the past by various British reports, often written some time after the battle and based on very partial or misunderstood evidence.

The Belgian dilemma

The Belgians were, of course, in a very difficult position. Former subjects of Napoleon, many had served in his administration and army; some had held important posts, making fine careers and fortunes. The majority of Belgians were not in favour of the Empire, but not everybody had reason to hate Napoleon; and the Allies knew this all too well. Belgium was the first country where Napoleon's war veterans organised themselves in societies to commemorate their service – the first one appeared in Bruges in 1815.

Allied suspicion of the Belgian elements within the Netherlands army is thus to some extent understandable. The difference between the histories of the North and South Netherlands was profound. Before the 'reunion' with the French Empire in 1810 Holland had been an independent state for centuries – a status won at a high cost, and therefore highly prized. When the French withdrew from Holland in 1813 she became an independent state once again. But the Belgians had never known independence; they had always been occupied by one power or another, the most recent being Austria-Hungary. In 1814 Belgians were divided between those who wanted to restore Austrian government, those who favoured unity with Holland, those who pressed for independence, and yet others who supported French Imperial rule.

Holland was mostly Protestant, with a sober culture, and a successful mercantile history founded on a maritime rather than a military tradition. Belgium was more Catholic, more liberal in her way of life, and with a military rather than a maritime past. Belgium had always been a region where armies were raised and battles fought. These cultural differences would play some part in the 1830 Belgian Revolution against the North Netherlands which would lead to Belgian independence.

The coming of war in 1815 had a painful impact on many of the participants. Families were divided; there were still soldiers of Belgian and Dutch origins in the French army at Quatre-Bras and Waterloo. Officers of the Allied army found themselves facing their former brothers-in-arms. Major-General Baron de Ghigny, former colonel of the French 12e Chasseurs à cheval but now leading a Netherlands light

1: Major, Maréchaussée; full dress, 1815
2: Captain, 1st Regiment, Légion Belge; full dress, 1814
3: Private, 2nd Regiment, Légion Belge; full dress, 1814

A

1: Gunner, Horse Artillery, Légion Belge, 1814
2: Captain, Chevau-légers van der Burch; full dress, 1814
3: Trumpeter, Chevau-légers van der Burch; full dress, 1814

1: Trooper, 5th Light Dragoons; campaign dress, 1815
2: Trumpeter, 5th Light Dragoons, 1815
3: Lieutenant, Sth Light Dragoons; campaign dress, 1815

1: Captain, 8th Hussars; full dress, 1815
2: Trooper, 8th Hussars; campaign dress, 1815
3: Trumpeter, 8th Hussars; full dress, 1815

D

1: Colonel, 2nd Carabiniers; full dress, 1815
2: Trooper, 2nd Carabiniers; campaign dress, 1815
3: Trumpeter, 2nd Carabiniers; full dress. 1815

E

1: Colonel, Line Infantry, 1815
2: Sergeant, right flank company, Line Infantry, 1815
3: Drummer, right flank company, Line Infantry, 1815

F

1; Hornist, flank company, 35th Chasseur Battalion, 1815
2: Chasseur, 36th Chasseur Battalion, 1815
3: Lieutenant, 35th Chasseur Battalion, 1815

G

1: Corporal-trumpeter, Horse Artillery; full dress, 1815
2: Captain, Horse Artillery; full dress, 1815
3: Officer, Foot Artillery; campaign dress, 1815

cavalry brigade, faced the prospect of fighting the regiment which he had commanded for years. Major-General Baron van Merlen, a former major in the Red Lancers of the Imperial Guard, was in the same position; LtGen Baron de Collaert, commanding the whole Netherlands Cavalry Division, was a former French general, and his heavy brigade was led by MajGen Trip, formerly colonel of the 14e Cuirassiers. (Other regimental commanders and officers are listed above under *Some Belgian regimental officers in 1815.*) It was a deeply confusing dilemma, exactly like that faced by men forced to choose sides in a civil war; and the pain of these tormented loyalties would still cause bitterness between the participants many years later.

* * *

The combined army of the North and South Netherlands in 1815 was commanded by the 23-year-old Prince of Orange, King William's heir and the future King William II. The British never said a word against his appointment; it was his birthright. Due to his past service as an aide to Wellington he was in any case regarded as a British as much as a Dutch officer.

When Napoleon's Army of the North crossed the French-Belgian frontier before dawn on 15 June 1815 the Allied armies were deployed in a wide arc. The Prussians, commanded by Marshal Blücher, controlled the area east of the Charleroi-Brussels road; the British-Netherlands forces were responsible for the territory west of the highway. The Belgian units in the Netherlands divisions were stationed as follows:

1st Infantry Division (LtGen J.A.Stedman) & *Indian Brigade* (LtGen C.H.W.Anthing), forming a reserve under command of Prince Frederik of the Netherlands. Stationed near Zottegem, north-west of Ninove. 1st Line Bn (with MajGen D.J.de Berens' 2nd Bde); 4th Line Bn (with MajGen B.d'Hauw's 1st Bde); and Col Schenk's Flankers Bn (with Indian Brigade).

2nd Infantry Division (LtGen H.G.Baron de Perponcher), headquarters at Nivelles. 7th Line Bn (with MajGen W.F.Count van Bylandt's 1st Bde), at Feluy, Arquennes & Petit-Roeulx-les-Nivelles; Capt E.J.Stevenart's 4th Foot Battery, at Nivelles.

3rd Infantry Division (LtGen D.H.Baron Chassé), headquarters at Haine-Saint-Pierre. 35th Chasseur Bn (with Col H.Detmers' 1st Bde), at Haine-Saint-Paul; 36th Chasseur Bn (with MajGen Count d'Aubremé's 2nd Bde), at Morlanwelz; 3rd Line Bn (with 2nd Bde), at Chapelle-les-Herlaimont; Capt C.F.Krahmer de Bichin's Horse Battery, near Seneffe.

Cavalry Division (LtGen J.A.Baron de Collaert), headquarters at Boussoit, approx. seven miles east of Mons. 2nd Carabiniers (with MajGen Jonkheer A.D.Trip's Heavy Bde), near Goegnies; 8th Hussars

Near-contemporary impression of French infantry and cavalry moving towards Quatre-Bras up the high road from Charleroi. The fierce resistance south of the crossroads of a few Dutch-Belgian and Nassau German units of Gen de Perponcher's 2nd Netherlands Division, under the brigade commanders Saxe-Weimar and Van Bylandt, saved the Allies' position on 15 and early 16 June.

(with MajGen C.E.Baron de Ghigny's 1st Light Bde), at Gottignies; 5th Light Dragoons (with MajGen J.B.Baron van Merlen's 2nd Light Bde), at Harveng. Van Merlen's brigade, with headquarters at Saint-Symphorien, was the nearest to the French frontier.

* * *

A single report came from Gen Chassé on 15 June to the effect that late on the evening of the 14th some of Van Merlen's troopers had intercepted a French message stating that they had started preparations for an offensive. With no corroboration, nor any indication of the direction of the threatened attack, the generals did not take it too seriously. The Prince of Orange left his headquarters at Braine-le-Comte for Brussels, to see Wellington and attend the Duchess of Richmond's ball.

When news of Napoleon's northwards advance reached Braine-le-Comte orders were sent out to all Netherlands units to assemble immediately at their alarm positions. The Cavalry Division was sent north of the River Haine, and Chassé's 3rd Infantry Division was concentrated at Fayt. The only Allied troops who were near to the scene of action were De Perponcher's 2nd Infantry Division, with Van Bylandt's 1st Bde concentrated at Nivelles, and Prince Bernhard of Saxe-Weimar's 2nd (Nassau) Bde at Quatre-Bras a few miles to the west.

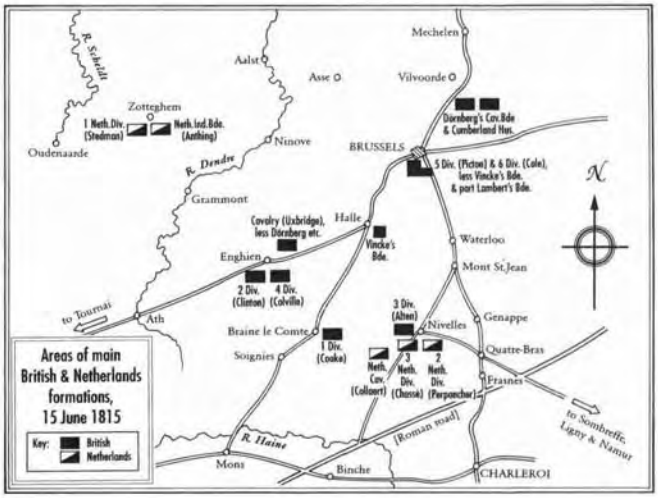
QUATRE-BRAS

Wellington's first orders, received on the evening of the 15th, were to concentrate the whole 2nd Division on Nivelles. This would have meant abandoning the strategic crossroads at Quatre-Bras, where the Charleroi-Brussels and Nivelles-Namur roads met – and thus control of east-west

(continued on page 33)

King William I of the Netherlands was also Grand Duke of Nassau, and so could call upon German troops from this possession. Prince Bernhard of Saxe-Weimar, commander of the Nassau brigade in the Netherlands army, is shown here by the artist Hoynck van Papendrecht at Quatre-Bras on 15 June 1815, with staff officers of the Orange-Nassau and Nassau light infantry regiments. The prince is supposed to have said: 'I am totally without orders, but I have never heard that a campaign starts with a retreat; so we will hold our ground at Quatre-Bras'.

movement. However, at about the same time Gen de Constant-Rebecque, chief-of-staff of the Netherlands Army, received reports that the French had arrived in force just north of Frasnes, two miles south of Quatre-Bras. In the absence of the Prince of Orange, De Constant-Rebecque issued on his own authority the order to Gen de Perponcher to concentrate his division at Quatre-Bras.



Meanwhile, the French advance guard was probing forward just north of Frasnes. The light cavalry of the Guard, under Lefebvre-Desnoettes, were held off for some time by the Nassau troops, who defended the position skilfully with the support of a Dutch horse artillery battery. As the evening drew on they gradually fell back on the main force at Quatre-Bras; at nightfall the French efforts petered out and both sides set up their bivouacs.

In the course of the night of 15/16 June Gen van Bylandt's troops marched to Quatre-Bras, arriving piecemeal during the early hours of the morning; the 7th Line Bn was, however, ordered to remain at Nivelles until relieved by Gen Chassé's division. On the morning of the 16th Gen de Perponcher had almost his whole division concentrated at the crossroads, but the only Belgian unit then present was Capt Stevenart's foot battery. A veteran of Napoleon's artillery, Stevenart had celebrated his 30th birthday ten days earlier; it would be his last.

After a careful inspection of the terrain, Gen de Perponcherand Prince Bernhard of Saxe-Weimar decided to both broaden and deepen their defence. The Nassau troops and Dutch light infantry were ordered forward to occupy the ground roughly along a line eastwards from the southern tip of the Bois de Bossu, including the farms of Petit and Grand Pierrepoint, via the farm of Lairalle on the main road, to the Bois de l'Hutte in the east. Stevenart's foot battery and the Dutch horse battery were positioned on each side of the main road to Brussels. During the morning of the 16th Marshal Ney's French force, which was only slowly receiving reinforcements and was unaware of the Allied strength, were content to exchange skirmishing fire.

Arrival of the 7th Line Battalion

At about 2p.m. the 7th Line Bn arrived from Nivelles, and were sent into the northern part of Bossu Wood to reinforce the thinly spread Nassauers. They were just in time for action: after an initial artillery bombardment Foy's and Bachelu's infantry divisions stirred into motion, preceded by swarms of skirmishers and protected on the flanks and rear by Piré's light cavalry. With drums beating and flags waving, the French columns moved north directly against the Nassau positions around both Pierrepoint farms on the right and against the Dutch light infantry near Lairalle in the centre. These troops kept up a vivid musket fire, supported by the guns along the main road; but they were soon forced northwards by the massive French onslaught. The Dutch Jägers fell back on Gemioncourt farm, less than a

mile from the crossroads, where, together with a Dutch militia battalion, they succeeded in checking the French advance for a while. The Netherlands artillery also fell back to take up new positions north of Gemioncourt.

As these events unfolded, the 7th Line Bn was brought forward and placed in close columns to the east of Bossu Wood, near to the Dutch Militia position on the main road to the right of Gemioncourt. Here the battalion made a determined stand; but the pressure of Foy's and Bachelu's columns became too great, especially since the Belgians lacked cavalry support. Captain Stevenart's battery was thrown into chaos in just ten minutes by murderous fire from Foy's batteries; Stevenart was killed and two of his eight guns disabled. Lieutenant Winssinger, also wounded, took over command and pulled the battery back to the main crossroads. At the same time the Dutch troops around Gemioncourt were severely tested by a joint attack of Foy's infantry and Piré's cavalry.

The timely arrival of the Prince of Orange put heart into the Netherlanders, and they even advanced some way in an attempt to silence the nearby enemy artillery; but they were soon thrown back. The Prince of Orange was almost caught by French Chasseurs à cheval, and barely found refuge among the 7th Line Battalion. It is said that he tore the jewelled insignia of an order from his coat and threw it among the Belgian soldiers, shouting: 'There, my brave fellows – You have all deserved it!' With a loud cheer they fastened the star to their colours.

At about 3p.m. another French division, under command of Jérôme Bonaparte, joined the fight in Bossu Wood. The Nassauers and Dutch Militia were pushed back into the northern part of the wood adjacent to the road to Nivelles. At the same time continuing assaults on the Netherlands centre also led to the loss of Gemioncourt and a general withdrawal towards the crossroads. In another 15 minutes the position would have been lost. Just in the nick of time reinforcements arrived – as did the Duke of Wellington. The first redcoats of LtGen Sir Thomas Picton's British 5th Division came up and immediately spread out along the Namur road east of the crossroads. An attempt by Van Bylandt's brigade and the British 1/28th to retake Gemioncourt failed, however.

Van Merlen's light cavalry

At about this time the first of the Allied cavalry units arrived: Gen van Merlen's light brigade, consisting of Col Edouard de Mercx's Belgian 5th Light Dragoons and Col Boreel's Dutch 6th Hussars, with a half-battery of horse artillery commanded by the Dutch Capt A.R.Geij van Pittius. They provided the Prince of Orange with the means for an attempt to check the French attacks; and the prince ordered Van Boreel, who was in the lead, to charge immediately. Van Boreel obeyed instantly, without reconnaissance of the field and, more seriously, without waiting to get his regiment from column of march into line formation. They collided with the French 6e Chasseurs à cheval just north of Gemioncourt; not surprisingly, the young Dutch hussars were soon thrown into confusion and had to retreat behind the houses of Quatre-Bras. In hot pursuit, the French light cavalry cut down many of Stevenart's battery at the crossroads before being driven off by the musketry of Picton's troops.

As soon as his front was clear, Col de Mercx formed up his 5th Light Dragoons and charged the French cavalry in the flank as they were in the process of re-forming just south of Germioncourt. The resulting mêlée

lasted for quite a time. Former comrades-in-arms recognised one another, and the French tried to persuade the Belgians to join them once more; but the answer was delivered with the sabre. Captain van Remoortere was wounded several times and left for dead on the battlefield; one of his wounds was caused by a sabre cut inflicted by his former *maréchal des logis chef* in the 19e Chasseurs à cheval, in which he had commanded a squadron. Gradually formation was lost, and when fresh French cavalry joined the fight the Belgians were ordered to disengage and rally north of Gemioncourt; the French did not pursue.

Tragically, the 5th Light Dragoons, whose green and yellow uniforms closely resembled those of French Chasseurs à cheval, were fired upon by a Scottish battalion defending the Namur road. Many saddles were emptied, and Col de Mercx was severely wounded, command passing to Maj de Looz-Corswarem. They reassembled north of Quatre-Bras, where the officers made strenuous efforts to restore their men's spirits.

A recently discovered letter from Edouard de Mercx to the Belgian Minister of War, written 23 years later, provides a telling postscript to this action. On 21 October 1838 several high-ranking officers of the Belgian Army had met for the purpose of fighting a duel. Those present were the writer; Col Mertens, formerly a captain in the 5th Light Dragoons; Gens de Looz-Corswarem and Duval de Beaulieu, formerly majors in the 5th; the French Gen Magnan, and his ADC Bartels.

Explaining the reasons for the duel, De Mercx states that when the 5th Light Dragoons were ordered to charge at Quatre-Bras following the failed attack by the 6th Hussars, Maj de Looz-Corswarem charged with his squadron, followed by De Mercx and the two squadrons which he had taken under his command. Captain Mertens and his 4th Squadron stood their ground, despite the order of his commanding officer. Later, when there were plans to distribute a medal for participation in this battle, Capt Mertens' squadron – which had suffered no casualties – was not included in the rewards. Mertens defended himself by pointing out that one of his sergeants had in fact been killed by a cannon ball; but according to De Mercx this incident happened some time before the charge took place. In any case, it was a less than convincing riposte when set against the 140 casualties suffered – according to De Mercx – by the other three squadrons during their brief engagement. The duel never took place; but was this inactivity by the 4th Sqn of the 5th Light Dragoons, which must have been noticed by others, the origin of the blame later directed at the Netherlands cavalry as a whole?

(The De Mercx letter speaks of four squadrons;

In the uniform of a British cavalry general, the young Prince of Orange leads the Dutch 5th Militia Bn from Van Bylandt's brigade into action at Quatre-Bras on 16 June 1815 against Marshal Ney's battle-hardened veterans. Dutch militiamen wore a British-style 'stovepipe' shako with a white metal 'sunray' plate. Whatever his lack of tactical skill the prince was not short of physical courage, as he demonstrated on several occasions at Quatre-Bras and Waterloo. (Engraving, collection of the Wellington Museum, Waterloo)

Lieutenant-General D.H.Baron Chassé, commander of the 3rd Netherlands Division in 1815, was known as 'General Bayonet'. An experienced officer, he had fought with the French army in Spain and in the 1814 French campaign.

but with only some 400 men present the regiment would have found it impossible to man four squadrons. De Mercx must have known what he was talking about; but could he have meant companies rather than squadrons?)

Notwithstanding these tragic incidents, Van Merlen's brigade had succeeded in buying enough time for Picton's division to deploy. Within half an hour these troops were further reinforced by the arrival of the Brunswick contingent; and the Allied position was finally stabilised.

Ney's generals renewed their efforts to capture the crossroads; after a fierce artillery bombardment an all-out attack ensued along the whole line. On the left Jérôme's division was to clear Bossu Wood and its eastern edges, while Foy would attack directly north towards the crossroads and Bachelu would advance down the Namur road from the east. Piré's light cavalry would advance in support. This renewed attack severely mauled Picton's and Brunswick's troops in the centre, as well as the Netherlands and Nassau units which held the northern part of Bossu Wood. The Belgians of the 7th Line Bn were driven from the wood by superior numbers after a stubborn two-hour fight.

The Allied centre held, however; and at about this time MajGen Sir Colin Halkett's British and MajGen Count Kielmansegge's Hanoverian brigades from the British 3rd Division came up in support. By about 5p.m. Marshal Ney realised that he was losing his grip on the battle. In a last attempt to break the Allied line he ordered Gen Guiton to charge with his heavy cavalry brigade, comprising the 8e and 11e Cuirassiers.

Under the personal leadership of their III Cavalry Corps commander, LtGen Kellerman, the tide of Cuirassiers flowed northwards, straight for the crossroads, where the Allied infantry were waiting for them drawn up in squares. Their charge almost succeeded; the Prince of Orange, unaware of their near presence, ordered Halkett's battalions echeloned between the Charleroi road and Bossu Wood to deploy from square to line formation. One British battalion was virtually destroyed and two others had to seek shelter in the woods; the Cuirassiers overthrew the countercharge of the Brunswick Hussars, and some reached the crossroads before they were caught in a crossfire.

Meanwhile, Gen van Merlen's brigade had come forward from behind the village of Quatre-Bras to execute a countercharge against Guiton's Cuirassiers. With the 5th Light Dragoons in the first line and the 6th Hussars in reserve, they met the French heavy regiments just south of the crossroads, and a bitter man-to-man fight ensued. Mowed down by the murderous fire of Picton's infantry and constantly assailed by the Netherlands light horse, the Cuirassiers suffered heavy losses. Without infantry support, or that which could have been provided by Piré's light cavalry, Kellerman was forced to sound the recall.

At about 6p.m. the Foot Guards of the British 1st Division were beginning to arrive from Nivelles; and by nightfall the French had been pushed back to their previous position north of Frasnes.

The Historical Section of the Royal Netherlands Army gives the casualties among Netherlands artillery and infantry at Quatre-Bras as 913 killed, missing and wounded; among the cavalry, about 220. The 7th Line Bn recorded a total of 94 casualties.

On 17 June, with the Prussian defeat at Ligny exposing his left flank, Wellington had to fall back towards Brussels. As Gen de Perponcher's division slogged northwards through a heavy thunderstorm and lashing rain, few of them probably understood that they had played the game in such a way that the Allies now held better cards in their hand than they had on the 15th. General Chassé's 3rd Division was ordered to make a rendezvous at a position that Wellington had long before selected as a possible battlefield; Gen Stedman's 1st Division marched from Zottegem towards Halle.

When that evening they reached the slight ridge of Mont St Jean, immediately south of the Forest of Soignes, the tired, sodden and hungry Allied army took what uncomfortable rest they could. After a wretched night the morning of the 18th dawned dry, with Napoleon's army facing the Allies from the south across lower ground, whose subtle folds were to prove deceptive on a number of occasions.

General Chassé's 3rd Netherlands Division was placed in reserve at Braine-l'Alleud, behind the right wing of the Allied army and watching over its west flank in case of a French turning movement. Its Belgian units were LtCol L'Honneux's 3rd Line Bn, LtCol Arnould's 35th Chasseur Bn, and LtCol Goethals' 36th Chasseur Battalion.

General de Collaert's Cavalry Division, with the brigades of Trip, De Ghigny, and Van Merlen, was placed south-west of Mont St Jean farm together with the British heavy cavalry. The three brigades stood between the Nivelles and Charleroi roads, each regiment in two ranks – De Ghigny on the left, Van Merlen in the centre and Trip on the right, with half-batteries of horse artillery in the spaces between.

General van Bylandt's brigade of De Perponcher's 2nd Netherlands Division was placed east of the Charleroi-Brussels road and south of the Wavre road (the 'chemin d'Ohain'): in other words, in the south-east angle of the famous crossroads which marked the left centre of Wellington's line. For some reason – inexplicable to eyewitnesses such as Shaw Kennedy and Gomm, and undiscovered since – the brigade was placed forward of the hedged, rather sunken lane which the Ohain road formed at this point; Picton's British infantry were behind it. Standing in

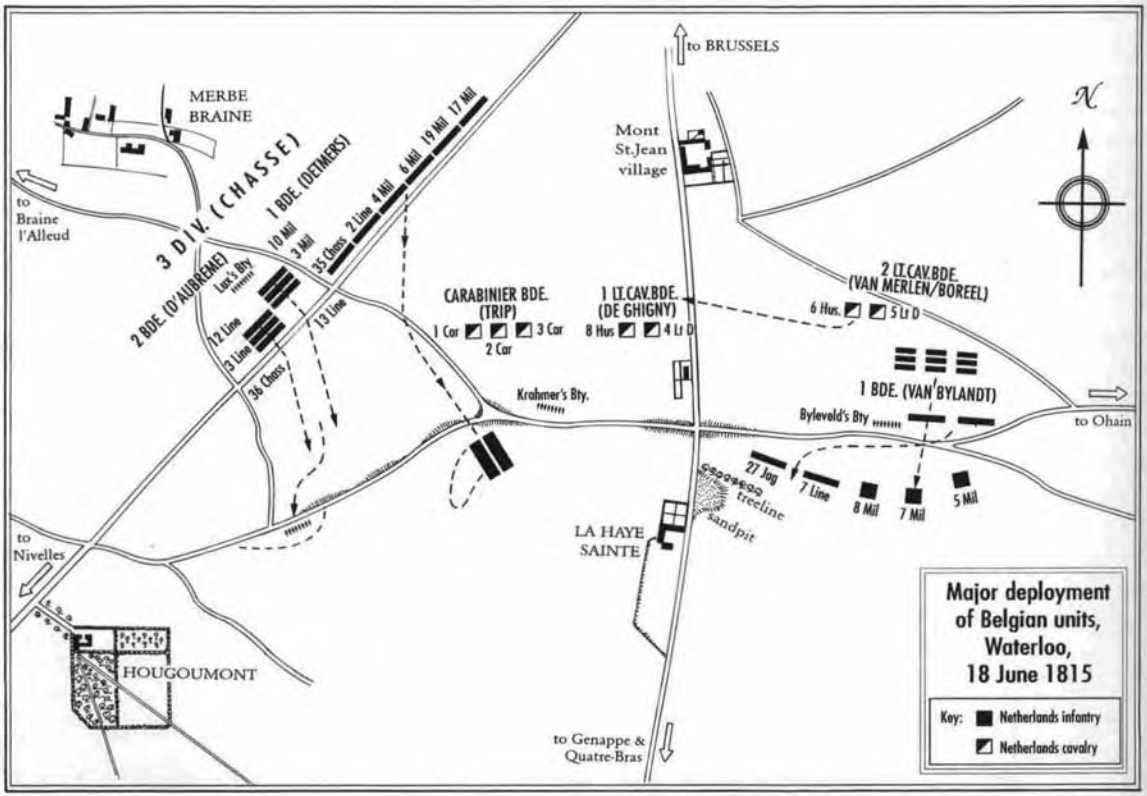
Detail from a preparatory cartoon for a painting of the wounding of the Prince of Orange by a ball through the shoulder on the afternoon of Waterloo – one of a number of paintings of this incident by Netherlands artists. In this version the prince's horse is down, and he still has his feet in the stirrups. At right, Gen de Constant-Rebecque dismounts to help him. (Collection of the Wellington Museum, Waterloo)

front of the whole Allied army, their position was unenviable. The brigade was drawn up in two ranks. Accounts of the exact deployment are contradictory; however, W.B.Craan's map published in September 1816 shows, in the first line from west to east: Dutch 27th Jägers, LtCol Vandensande's Belgian 7th Line, Dutch 7th & 8th Militia, with the Dutch 5th Militia – which had suffered 303 casualties out of a strength of 482 men at Quatre-Bras – held as a reserve in the rear.

D'Erlon's attack

At about 11.50a.m. on 18 June the first French cannon shots were fired, and the battle began. In order to draw Allied troops away from the centre, Napoleon ordered Jérôme to make an attack on the Allied right. Here the woods of Hougoumont masked the chateau of that name, strongly held by British Foot Guards with some Hanoverian and Nassau units. Unimaginatively repeated, the successive French attacks on Hougoumont would last all day.

Meanwhile Napoleon prepared his main attack by Count d'Erlon's I Corps on the Allied left. Van Bylandt's men had been able to watch the assembly of the French 'Grand Battery' of perhaps 80 guns on high ground near La Belle Alliance east of the Charleroi-Brussels road. Now, in their exposed position, a murderous fire played upon them for perhaps an hour. Mostly young troops (though with experienced leaders), they had been roughly handled at Quatre-Bras, since when they had endured a hard march and a wretched night in the field under heavy rain, and with no rations or fuel. At some point they were ordered to lie down in ranks, but their casualties were still significant.



At about 12.30p.m. Gen de Perponcher received orders from the Prince of Orange, commanding the Allied I Corps, to take up position further back, behind the hedged lane to Ohain, between the brigades of Kempt and Pack. This authorised (and overdue) withdrawal was described by some British commentators as a broken flight, and this flagrant slander has been repeated in later accounts. Despite the better cover afforded by their new position the Netherlanders still suffered greatly from the concentrated French artillery fire for at least another hour – the Ohain road lay not on the crest but still on the forward slope.

At about 1.30p.m. D'Erlon's four divisions, totalling about 16,000 men, advanced towards La Haye Sainte and Picton's division in four massive columns; those of Donzelot and Marcognet faced Van Bylandt's and Pack's brigades. Notwithstanding the intensive artillery and musketry fire which punished them as soon as they came within range, Marcognet's division drove straight across the hedged lane and into the Dutch Militia who stood to the left of the 7th Line Battalion. While some part of the brigade was forced to fall back upon Picton's second line behind the crest, others, apparently including the Belgian line infantry, stood their ground or only recoiled slightly, continuing to pour volleys into the right flank of the French column.

Detail of the painting by Flameng of Marshal Ney leading the charge of the French reserve cavalry. They are shown in the so-called 'sunken road' (described, and greatly exaggerated, by Victor Hugo); the Ohain road west of the crossroads was to some extent sunken, but not so deeply. The removal of soil after the battle to build the commemorative Lion Mount destroyed this feature. (Collection of the 'Dernier Quartier-général de Napoléon, Musée provincial', formerly the Musée Le Caillou, Vieux-Genappe)

When Gen Kempt ordered a counterattack, Col van Zuylen van Nyefelt, chief-of-staff to De Perponcher, took the brigade forward again – Van Bylandt had been wounded. Van Zuylen would soon be wounded himself, by which time he had no choice but to hand over command in his turn to the last of the four battalion commanders still able to take it: Col de Jongh of the 8th Militia, who had been wounded at Quatre-Bras and was now roped into his saddle. Seriously wounded, LtCol Vandensande handed over command of the 7th Line to Capt Bast.

The counterattack by the Allied infantry stopped the French in their tracks. It was then exploited by the charge of the Household and Union Brigades of British heavy cavalry on both sides of the Charleroi-Brussels road, which overthrew the Cuirassiers who had covered D'Erlon's flank and then cut down his infantry in their hundreds. (Some Belgian officers had not forgotten their years in the French army; Lt Scheltens, a 25-year-old veteran of campaigns from Spain to Russia, who had risen to be a sergeant in the 2e Grenadiers de la Garde, now saved the lives of two officers of the 105e de Ligne, sending them as prisoners to Brussels.)

Notoriously, the British heavy cavalry then charged on towards the Grand Battery, only to be horribly mauled when French cavalry units cut them off. Their total destruction was prevented by the intervention of

Vandeleur's and De Ghigny's brigades. The latter had already assisted Saxe-Weimar in the defence of Smohain and La Haye on the extreme left of the Allied line against Durutte's division, the far right hand column of D'Erlon's attack. Now, with the Belgian 8th Hussars in the first line and the Dutch 4th Light Dragoons in reserve, De Ghigny fell upon the Lanciers who were doing great execution among Vandeleur's Light Dragoons. Eventually, at about 3p.m., all the Netherlands units returned to their original positions, including Van Bylandt's brigade, who would maintain their place in the line for the rest of the day.

While the artillery on both sides resumed their bombardment, the French could be seen concentrating their cavalry in the centre on the slopes west of La Belle Alliance. Wellington ordered his reserves to move up into the front line. These included the Brunswick contingent, and Gen Chassé's 3rd Netherlands Division from Braine l'Alleud, who arrived on the field at about 4 o'clock. The Brunswickers and Col H.Detmers' 1st Bde would come into the part of the line held by MajGen Count Alten's 3rd Division, with on their left the Hanoverians of Von Ompteda and Kielmansegge and Von Kruse's Nassau contingent, and on their right Sir Colin Halkett's brigade. The 2nd Bde, commanded by MajGen Count d'Aubremé, were further to the west behind the brigades of Maitland and Adam.

French cavalry attacks

Marshal Ney now brought forward Milhaud's 21 squadrons of Cuirassiers and Lefebvre-Desnoettes' 19 squadrons of Imperial Guard light cavalry – some 5,000 horsemen in all – for another attempt to break the Allies.

When Gen de Collaert observed this he ordered the Netherlands cavalry division to move to the centre of the line. Since the British Household and Union brigades had suffered severe losses during their earlier engagement, Trip's Carabinier Bde were the only heavy cavalry still available to Wellington. They were positioned in the centre behind Alten's division to receive the main French attack, while Dornberg's King's German Legion light cavalry remained on the right and the surviving British squadrons on the left. In the second line stood the light brigades of Grant, De Ghigny, Arentschildt and Van Merlen. These preparations were completed just in time; soon dozens of trumpets across the valley sounded the advance, and the mass of French cavalry stirred into motion – first at a walk, then a trot, then kicking into a gallop.

The attack was directed against the Hanoverian infantry of Kielmansegge and the British battalions commanded by Sir Colin

Captain Krahmer de Bichin's Belgian horse artillery battery opens fire on the advancing columns of the French Imperial Guard in the climactic stage of the battle of Waterloo; cf Plate H. (Collection of the Dutch Royal Army Museum, Delft)

Halkett. The French horsemen first received roundshot and canister from the Allied artillery, which did not check their pace. Breasting the ridge, they were greeted by galling musket fire from the infantry squares; still they came on, overrunning the battery positions and forcing the gunners to find refuge among the infantry. But their formations were soon lost, and casualties quickly mounted. This was the moment for a countercharge. Trip's 1st and 2nd Carabiniers were brought forward and conducted a perfect charge against the 7e and 12e Cuirassiers, who were thrown into retreat with heavy losses.

(Moments before the Carabiniers charged, a French Cuirassier officer had ridden up and paraded in front of the Dutch Carabiniers, challenging any officer to personal combat. No Dutch officer responded. However, Lt Delobel of the 2nd Carabiniers – a veteran of the 27e Chasseurs à cheval, who had seen these duels between opposing regiments during the Empire – accepted the challenge. Both men were wounded, Delobel by a sword thrust in the chest.)

The French reserve cavalry resumed their attacks upon the Allied squares. Once more Trip advanced to meet them, with the 2nd Carabiniers in the first line and the 3rd behind them. Their compact formation broke through a scattered French force of Cuirassiers, Lanciers and Chasseurs à cheval and once more drove them from the ridge; the French were pursued down the slope as far as the nearest enemy batteries, south of La Haye Sainte. General Trip then ordered the recall, regrouping his men and bringing them back behind the infantry.

The guns of Blücher's advancing Prussians could be heard to the east; and Marshal Ney decided to commit all the cavalry at his disposal in order to force a decision before their weight could be brought to bear. General Roussel d'Hurbal's Cuirassier and Carabinier division and Guyot's division of heavy cavalry of the Guard were led forward; and more than 10,000 horsemen plunged across the muddy valley and up the corpse-strewn slopes of Mont St Jean. There was no space left for the Allied cavalry to conduct a countercharge. Although the front lines of Allied regiments did engage the nearest French units, the infantry were essentially on their own; the cavalry's overall role was passive, forming a stop line behind the infantry to prevent any French cavalry from breaking through.

Further to the west, along the road to Nivelles, stood the brigade of De Ghigny; this formation had initially been left out of the encounters with the Cuirassiers, and had only been involved in individual combats between adversaries of

Searching among the wounded and dead on the morning after the battle. This print by Dubourg, published by Edward Orme in April 1816, generally agrees with the many eyewitness accounts. (Collection of the Wellington Museum, Waterloo)

either side. The brigade became much more closely involved when the complete surrounding of Hougoumont allowed Roussel d'Hurbal's Cuirassiers and the Grenadiers à cheval to cross the valley close to the contested chateau and move directly against Maitland's Foot Guards. In conjunction with Grant, De Ghigny counter-charged the Cuirassiers and drove them back. When he returned to his position he met the Prince of Orange, who ordered him to attack the Grenadiers à cheval, who were making good progress on the right. This attack failed, however, losing its formation when a nearby French horse artillery battery opened fire on the head of the column.

Interior of the church in Waterloo village. After its enlargement in 1823 many memorial plaques, raised by British and Netherlands regiments to their Waterloo dead, were transferred to the new nave. (Collection of the Wellington Museum, Waterloo)

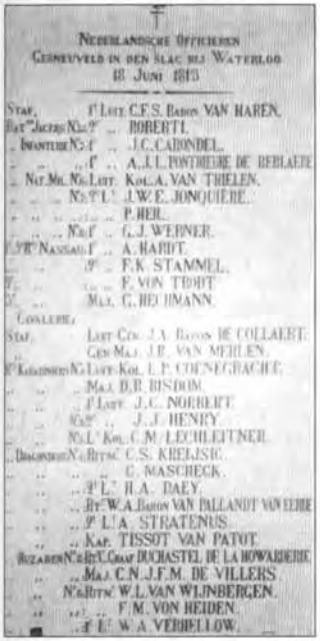
As more and more French cavalry came forward De Ghigny too was now forced to adopt a more defensive role behind the infantry. Later he was ordered to move to the east of the Charleroi-Brussels road in support of Vivian's and Vandeleur's light cavalry brigades, who were still guarding the extreme left where the Prussians were expected to arrive. In the meantime Van Merlen's brigade, which was positioned close above La Haye Sainte, had also taken part in the repulse of the French cavalry – in particular, the 2e Lanciers de la Garde (the Red Lancers), to which regiment Van Merlen had belonged during his days in the Imperial army.

Under constant pressure from the French cavalry, the Allies had failed to reinforce and resupply the defenders of La Haye Sainte farm, which fell into French hands at about 6 o'clock. This enabled the French to bring guns up close to the farm, which poured canister fire into the immobile infantry squares; it also allowed a build-up of their own infantry under cover of the buildings. Within about half an hour the Prince of Orange, who was bringing up some Nassau infantry, was shot in the shoulder and had to be taken from the field. Gen de Collaert, commander of the Netherlands Cavalry Division, was hit in the foot by a shell fragment; he would die from this wound a year later. After another charge with his brigade Gen Van Merlen was hit in the stomach by a cannonball and killed instantly. Command over the Netherlands cavalry now passed to Gen Trip, and Col de Bruyn of the 2nd Carabiniers took over the heavy brigade.

In the east, Prince Bernhard of Saxe-Weimar was forced by Gen Durutte's division to abandon the positions at Smohain and Frischermont; but this success was short-lived. The combined forces of Vandeleur, Vivian and De Ghigny fell upon them, and the French infantry hurriedly fell back to the enclosures of Frischermont.

The Imperial Guard attack

Having temporarily stabilised the situation at Plancenoit, where the Prussians threatened to overwhelm Lobau's VI Corps and cut off his line of retreat, Napoleon directed ten battalions of his Imperial Guard towards the battered Allied centre-right in a final attempt to burst through. All along the line the French stepped up their efforts. When some squadrons of Cuirassiers, Dragons and Lanciers threatened to pass



TOP **On this memorial plaque to the Netherlands cavalry officers who fell at Waterloo can be found the names of Generals de Collaert and Van Merlen, as well as 1st Lt J.J.Henry of the 2nd Carabiniers, and Capt Count du Chastel de la Howarderie and Maj C.N.J.F.M. de Villers of the 8th Hussars.**

ABOVE **A monument erected at Waterloo in 1914, commemorating the Belgians who fell on 18 June 1815.**

through the Nassau and Hanoverian infantry they were met by a determined countercharge of the 2nd Carabiniers and thrown back.

In view of the approach of the Imperial Guard, Wellington ordered Vivian and Vandeleur to move their brigades from the left to the centre. De Ghigny followed, since he had successfully acted as a reserve for these brigades all day. This was made possible by the attack of Ziethen's Prussian I Corps on Durutte's forces around Smohain and Frischermont.

When the Imperial Guard infantry reached the crest, under the lash of the Allied artillery, they were confronted by a heavy fire from Maitland's Foot Guards in their front, and the flanking fire of several other regiments. The French veterans hesitated, and Chassé saw that it was time for his fresh division to drive them back. Noticing that the nearby artillery was running low on ammunition, to the extent that some guns stopped firing, he ordered Maj Vander Smissen forward with his two batteries. The Belgian horse battery of Capt Krahmer came up and opened a lethal canister fire upon the Imperial Guardsmen. Shortly afterwards Chassé launched his 6,000 men into a bayonet charge on the nearest French column, with the infantry brigade of Detmers in the lead and that of d'Aubremé in reserve; at the head of Detmers' brigade were the Belgians of the 35th Chasseur Battalion.

During several hours spent guarding the Allied flank at Braine-l'Alleud the Belgian infantrymen had been well nourished by the inhabitants. Water was short on the battlefield, but Chassé's men had been served beer and the local Jenever. Their final attack on the French Imperial Guard was so animated that British officers could hardly believe their eyes. The French broke and fled; Detmers continued the pursuit as far as the high ground south of Hougoumont. The arrival of the Prussians on the battlefield broke the morale of the French army, which crumbled into chaos and fled, every man for himself. Wellington ordered a general advance by the whole Allied line.

De Ghigny's light horse joined up once again with Vivian and Vandeleur in crushing isolated elements of the French which still offered resistance. Van Merlen's brigade had ceased to exist. Major Looz-Corswarem and his Belgian 5th Light Dragoons, unwilling to serve under command of a Dutch officer (Boreel), had joined up with the Belgian-born De Ghigny; and the Dutch 6th Hussars had moved to the west to support Chassé. The Carabiniers, together with the remnants of the British heavy cavalry, also followed the advance of the infantry along the road to Genappe. During the night the pursuit was abandoned to the Prussians, and all Netherlands troops bivouacked on the battlefield. (On 21 June the Netherlands cavalry was reorganised, with the 5th Light Dragoons transferring to the former brigade of De Ghigny and the 8th Hussars to one commanded by Trip.)

Netherlands casualties, 15–18 June 1815

Of the nearly 4,200 Belgians who fought at Quatre-Bras and Waterloo no more than 3,000 were fit to continue service on the evening of 18 June. Out of 399 officers and men, the **2nd Carabiniers** lost one officer and 87 men killed or missing, four officers and 64 men wounded. Six officers had horses killed under them. Among the dead was Lt Henry; Maj de Brias, Lts Arnould and Delobel, and 2nd Lt Majoye were among the wounded. Cadet Emile de Heush was promoted to lieutenant on the

Knight's Grand Cross of the Military Order of William, 1815–1820 pattern. Created in April 1815 by King William I shortly after he took the throne, this became the national order of the Netherlands. The first members were mostly those who rallied to the new monarchy, and soldiers – Dutch, Belgian, and British – who had fought at Waterloo.

battlefield, and received the Military Order of William. In all 24 crosses of the Order would be awarded to members of the regiment, including Col de Bruyn, Maj de Brias, Lts Arnould and Delobel, and 2nd Lts de Veken and Majoye.

The **8th Hussars'** casualties at Waterloo, from a strength of 401, were one officer and 132 men killed or missing, seven officers and 145 NCOs and troopers wounded. Major de Villers died of his wounds two days later. The regiment would receive a total of 24 crosses of the Military Order of William.

From a strength of 441 the **5th Light Dragoons** lost 81 NCOs and privates killed or missing, two officers and 74 rankers wounded. The Military Order of William was awarded to 28 survivors. Captain Mertens, who had received the cross of the Legion of Honour while in French service, distinguished himself at Waterloo, making good his inactivity at Quatre-Bras.

The **3rd Line Bn** suffered 57 men killed or missing, two officers and 23 rankers wounded, and received 24 crosses of the Military Order of William. From a strength of 701 all ranks the **7th Line Bn** had two officers and 100 men killed or missing, six officers and 134 men wounded; the battalion was awarded 27 crosses. Out of 605 all ranks the **35th Chasseur Bn** had two officers seriously wounded of whom one died shortly afterwards, and three officers slightly wounded; eight men were killed or missing, 60 wounded; 29 received the Military Order of William. The **36th Chasseurs** had no officer casualties but 44 dead and missing and 10 wounded among the rank and file, from a strength of 655 all ranks; the battalion received 26 crosses of the Military Order of William.

The **artillery** foot battery of Capt Stevenart suffered 115 casualties. Captain Krahmer de Bichin's horse battery at Waterloo lost five men killed and 21 wounded, 30 horses killed and 21 wounded, and 22 men and 21 horses missing. Together Vander Smissen's Artillery Corps received 35 crosses of the Military Order of William.

When the Duke of Wellington returned to Brussels from France he asked to be introduced to the officers of the Belgian 2nd Carabiniers in order to congratulate them for their bravery on the field of Waterloo.

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THE PLATES

A1: Major, Maréchaussée; full dress, 1815
Originally prescribed a uniform of green coat and grey trousers – typical of the Austrian influence in the Belgian Legion – the Maréchaussée suffered, like the Legion, from a lack of funds and organisation. It was only with the coming to power of the Dutch government late in 1814 that matters improved, and the blue uniform was adopted. This senior officer wears essentially the uniform of the mounted companies, though with silver distinctions and an epaulette of rank. The sky blue turnbacks bore silver grenades.

A2: Captain, 1st Regiment, Légion Belge; full dress, 1814
Iconography regarding the Belgian Legion is rare. We know that the organisation and equipment of the units during this fairly brief and chaotic period left much to be desired.There is one plate which illustrates the uniforms – or planned uniforms – for the infantry, and the Austrian influence is very clear (although rank distinctions were French). Officers, providing their own uniforms, are more likely to have been correctly dressed.

A3: Private, 2nd Regiment, Légion Belge; full dress, 1814
The Austrian shako with front and rear peaks is shown both with and without the cut-out brass 'LB'; the black Austrian cockade and red pompon seem to have been common to all. The surviving documentation of orders for uniforms for the Legion (the white cloth was British-made) makes no mention of distinctive colours for the four regiments. There is, however, testimony from former Sgt Estagnier of the 2nd Regiment which seems to support a scheme of facings and piping such as that shown by Richard Knötel (who does not give his sources).

B1: Gunner, Horse Artillery, Légion Belge, 1814
Documentation is as sparse for the artillery as for all other elements of the Legion, and there are two views about the uniforms worn. It is almost certain that these were of French horse artillery style. We illustrate the interpretation in dark blue; but there is a suggestion that it was in fact in dark green, at least initially. That green was the colour of the first uniform worn is supported by the orders placed by Col Aman de Schwanberg for his own uniform. This included a pair of gold full epaulettes, embroidered gold grenades, a gold sword knot with gold tassel, gold-laced red leather sword belt, gold lace for a shoulder belt pouch, gold lace and tassels for his Hungarian boots, gold cords and tassels for a shako, etc.

B2: Captain, Chevau-légers van der Burch; full dress, 1814
Some German influence is to be noted in this uniform. The officer's helmet is decorated with foliate ornaments, like those of the Westphalian Garde du Corps of King Jérôme Napoléon. The green and yellow colours were Austrian, as was the style of Hungarian knots on the breeches. All lace and fittings were in silver, not in lemon yellow as stated by some sources. Under the Dutch government officers continued to wear silver distinctions, unlike other Belgian units.

B3: Trumpeter, Chevau-légers van der Burch; full dress, 1814
The trumpeter's distinctions were a jacket in reversed colours, and a black-over-red helmet crest; note the 'LB' on the trooper's helmet plate. The trumpeters always rode next to unit and squadron commanding officers in order to pass their orders by trumpet calls, and their highly visible uniforms therefore acted as rallying points for the troopers in action.

C1: Trooper, 5th Light Dragoons; campaign dress, 1815
This plate shows the uniforms of the retitled Van der Burch regiment under the Dutch government – both in the initial North and South Netherlands dual army and in the later unified army. In campaign dress the troopers were hard to distinguish from French Chasseurs à cheval, and at Quatre-Bras the regiment was fired upon in error by Picton's infantry. We illustrate the fully dressed shako; in the field it would normally be covered with black oilcloth.

C2: Trumpeter, 5th Light Dragoons, 1815
Some sources give a yellow single-breasted jacket, cut like the popular French *habit kinsky,* instead of the double-breasted style; and white plumes in place of green tipped with yellow.

Colonel de Bruyn of the Belgian 2nd Carabiniers led his regiment at Waterloo in full dress uniform and wearing his cross of the Military Order of William. This portrait is particularly useful for the helmet details. See Plate E1. (Collection of the Belgian Royal Army Museum, Brussels)

C3: Lieutenant, 5th Light Dragoons; campaign dress, 1815
On campaign not much of the elegant French-style uniform would be visible. The officer's tall *shako rouleau* has an oilcloth cover, showing only a pompon; his handsome laced pouch belt is protected by a black leather cover; and his grey cloak or overcoat is worn rolled and strapped around the body to give some protection against sabre cuts. *Errata:* The overall stripes should be double.

D1: Captain, 8th Hussars; full dress, 1815
Raised as a volunteer corps by the Prince de Croij with the intention of attracting members of the most important Belgian families to the service of the new government, the regiment was given an elegant hussar-style uniform in sky blue with red facings and silver distinctions. Note the tall *shako rouleau*, special to officers; some sources give this as red instead of black. Its decorations are similar to those worn by officers of the 5th Light Dragoons. In gala dress the cords on the uniform were replaced by silver chains, and the shako plume by white heron feathers.

D2: Trooper, 8th Hussars; campaign dress, 1815
On campaign all expensive items were left at the depot or in the regimental baggage wagons. The 8th Hussars left their pelisses behind, wearing oilcloth shako covers, grey riding overalls, plain leather sabretaches, and rolled overcoats.

D3: Trumpeter, 8th Hussars; full dress, 1815
As was conventional, trumpeters of the regiment wore troopers' uniform but in reversed colours; sometimes the fur pelisse trim was in brown instead of black.

E1: Colonel, 2nd Carabiniers; full dress, 1815
A portrait in the Belgian Army Museum in Brussels (see page 45) shows us a proud Col de Bruyn pointing at a map of Waterloo and wearing the cross of the Military Order of William. Dating from just after the Hundred Days campaign, it usefully illustrates details of the officer's helmet, showing a white feather plume rising from a black base, and gilt foliate decorations on the silvered skull.

E2: Trooper, 2nd Carabiniers; campaign dress, 1815
The Carabiniers were regarded as being the elite of the Belgian troops, organised and equipped very much on the model of the French Cuirassiers, though not at this stage armoured. They were the only regiment in the Carabinier brigade with helmets – the 1st and 3rd Dutch regiments still wore the old bicorne hat. After Waterloo they would all receive helmets, and French cuirasses recovered from the battlefield. One source states that the red side stripe on the overalls was only added after Waterloo.

E3: Trumpeter, 2nd Carabiniers; full dress, 1815
Sometimes shown with a long-tailed jacket, the trumpeters in fact wore the same uniform as the troopers but in reversed colours and with white epaulettes. The helmet was worn with a white crest and red plume. This helmet was in fact impractical to wear, as the brass lion's-mask on the front was heavy enough to unbalance it.

F1: Colonel, Line Infantry, 1815
The only differences in the uniforms of the Dutch and Belgian line infantry lay in the headdress and the lace and button colours. The Belgians wore this 'Belgic' shako, and had gold metal and lace; the Dutch wore the Austrian two-peaked shako, and silver metal and lace. Facings were white throughout the Netherlands infantry. This field officer wears two gold epaulettes with heavy bullion fringes, gold shako ornaments, the universal officer's sash in the colour of the House of Orange – but also his cross of the Legion of Honour, won in Napoleon's service.

F2: Sergeant, flank company, Line Infantry, 1815
The North and South Netherlands Line battalions consisted of a staff, a depot company, four centre companies, and two flank companies presumably corresponding with French *grenadier* and *voltigeur* companies. These *flanquers* were the elite of the infantry, sometimes detached from several units to form Flanker Battalions. They were probably distinguished by red and green shako plumes and cords respectively – the sources are unclear; both wore these padded blue shoulder rolls with white piping. This sergeant has mixed red and gold shako cords, and a single gold rank stripe on each forearm above the cuff patch. The sources differ on these insignia – some give French-style diagonals, others point-up chevrons – but this style seems more likely for Line infantry.

F3: Drummer, flank company, Line Infantry, 1815
Flank company drummers wore 'swallow's nests' below the shoulder rolls; this variant of the listed colours is after Aerts. The Belgic shako may have been a combination of the British and Portuguese styles, in that the false front seems to have been slightly higher than the British 1812 pattern. The fittings were attached in the British manner: a universal crowned

OPPOSITE **A colonel of the Netherlands Line Infantry – cf Plate F1. The uniform is dark blue faced and piped white; two gold epaulettes with heavy bullion fringes identify his rank, and their colour his Belgian nationality. Note that as a veteran of the Napoleonic Wars he wears the cross of the Legion of Honour. Under the new Dutch monarchy the display of this French decoration was frowned upon, but it was tolerated out of unwillingness to offend officers who had received the award for bravery. A light cavalry model waist belt is also just visible. (Collection of the Belgian Royal Army Museum, Brussels)**

RIGHT **Though he belongs to a Dutch unit, the 16th Jäger Bn, this corporal of a *flanquer* company illustrates most features of the green and yellow uniform also worn by the Belgian 35th and 36th Chasseurs – cf Plate G. Note the padded rolls worn over the ends of the shoulder straps, the French-style hide knapsack and *sabre-briquet*, and the two yellow chevrons of rank. (Print after W.B.van der Kooc)**

plate bearing 'W' for William, a short plume rising from a national cockade on the left side, and a cord across the front with tassels on the right side.

G1: Hornist, flank company, 35th Chasseur Battalion, 1815

The yellow-faced green uniform and Austrian-style shako was worn by both Dutch 'Jäger' and Belgian 'Chasseur' light infantry battalions. As in other armies, the buglehorn was considered the best instrument for passing orders in light infantry units, rather than the drum of the Line troops. The flank company hornist is distinguished by 'swallow's nests', and by green shoulder rolls trimmed with yellow rather than with red; officially he should also have a red plume, but such details can hardly have been universally correct given that the army took the field only six months after the January 1815 regulations were issued. (The Dutch government specifically limited the hornist's distinctions to the 'swallow's nests', as they were anxious to avoid the expense of the more lavish embellishments worn by e.g. French musicians.)

G2: Chasseur, 36th Chasseur Battalion, 1815

This is the regulation uniform of the centre companies of both Belgian battalions, differenced only by the number above the horn badge on the shako. (It is possible that some or all of the light battalions wore NCO distinctions *en chevron*.) The 35th and 36th Chasseurs saw action only in the final stage of the battle of Waterloo, with the advance of Gen Chassé's division. Well refreshed by their countrymen during their wait at Braine-l'Alleud, they stormed forward towards a column of the Imperial Guard with an élan which amazed British observers.

G3: Lieutenant, 35th Chasseur Battalion, 1815

The overall appearance of the long-tailed officer's uniform, with the single epaulette of this rank, resembles that of Line officers apart from the colours and the Austrian shako. Typically for a light infantry officer, he carries a sabre rather than an épée.

H1: Corporal-trumpeter, Horse Artillery; full dress, 1815

As in other mounted arms of service, trumpeters wore reversed colours: red faced with black, with black and yellow epaulettes. They were also the only personnel in the Artillery Corps whose identity as Belgian or Dutch was immediately apparent: the former wore the Austrian-style shako, the latter a fur colpack. The rank of corporal-trumpeter was indicated by a single gold sleeve stripe.

H2: Captain, Horse Artillery; full dress, 1815

The shako worn by the Dutch units of the combined army, and by all artillery, was in fact a mixture of French and Austrian influences; the general style and ornaments were French, the front and rear peaks Austrian. The horse artillery was a single unified corps, with batteries commanded by both Dutch and Belgian officers assigned at divisional level and serving together.

H3: Officer, Foot Artillery; campaign dress, 1815

Distinguished as foot artillery by his shako plate and infantry-style sword, this officer wears a typical undress coat – a plain black frock coat with two rows of gilt buttons. The Belgian companies forming the 4th Bn of the unified army's Artillery Corps were largely recruited from former veterans of Napoleon's artillery; well trained and experienced, they proved their capabilities at Quatre-Bras and Waterloo. The 4th Foot Battery engaged at the former battle was commanded – until his death in action by Capt Stevenart, and later by Lt Winssinger. It suffered heavy losses at the hands of French artillery and cavalry, but fought with great spirit.

Men-at-Arms • 355

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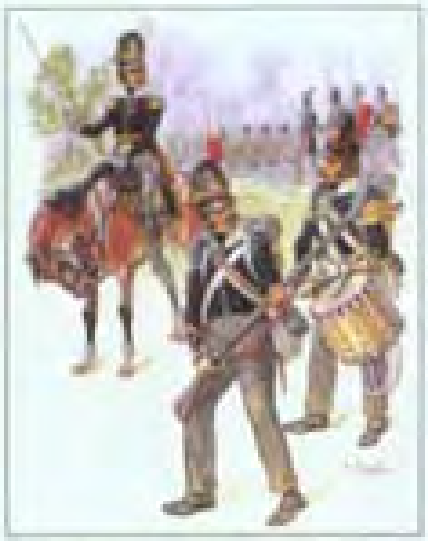

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The army commanded by the Duke of Wellington at Quatre-Bras and Waterloo included two infantry divisions and three cavalry brigades of the newly-unified Netherlands (or 'Dutch-Belgian') army. The part played by these troops in the two battles, under experienced officers many of whom had seen long service in Napoleon's campaigns, has often been unjustly dismissed by British commentators. The organisation, uniforms, and battle record of the Belgian units are explained here in detail by an experienced researcher in Continental archives, and illustrated by a specialist in the period.

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